PROFITING FROM THE PAST: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HISTORY AND THE TOURIST INDUSTRY IN TASMANIA 1856-1972

by
Frederick David Young BSc (Bristol), Post-Grad. Cert. Ed.,
Grad. Dip. Env. Studs. (Hons.)

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ABSTRACT

This thesis traces the developing relationship between history and the tourist industry in Tasmania from 1856 to 1972. Its title, *Profiting from the Past*, has two meanings, both major themes of the work. The first meaning, the literal, implies that the past may be treated as a commodity from which money may be made. The second meaning, the metaphorical, implies that people may benefit from a knowledge and understanding of what has gone before.

That Tasmania had a past was all too apparent to both locals and tourists in 1856, the year in which the island was declared an independent colony – yet there was no "historical tourism" as such. By 1972, the year when a newly-created government department assumed control of the state's major historical sites, both Tasmania's generalised "past" and its wealth of discrete historical attractions, many of them "commodified", were as large a factor in luring tourists to the state as was its much vaunted scenery.

Throughout the period in question, the manner in which Tasmania's past has been sought by tourists, promoted to them and in some instances kept from them is examined, and the benefits which they hoped to find in Tasmania's past are analysed. This analysis is carried out in the light of categories of 'past-related benefits' identified by David Lowenthal in *The Past is a Foreign Country*. The work of the promoters, interpreters and exploiters of Tasmania's past is also considered. The inquiry into the ideologies driving this group is conducted in the light of J H Plumb's analysis in *The Death of the Past*.

The development of historical tourism is also described in relation to the growth of Tasmania's tourist industry as a whole, to the development of Tasmanian historiography and to the changing sensibilities of the Tasmanians themselves as they struggled to come to terms with a problematic past, often from the standpoint of an unsatisfactory present. The effect of "development" and the role of the conservation movement are considered where these factors have influenced the evolution of the "tourist-historical-landscape", and hence the tourist industry.

In every aspect of the selling of Tasmania's past, its material preservation, interpretation and promotion, there has been both an ideological and a commercial element. This thesis concludes that in general the latter has overridden the former – thus literal profit has determined the nature of metaphorical profit. The implications this conclusion holds both for Tasmania's "heritage" and its "heritage industry" are considered in a closing chapter.

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Anyone who wishes to undertake historical research in Tasmania is fortunate in having available to them a wealth of easily accessible archival material administered by knowledgable and interested people. I would like to thank the staffs of the Morris Miller Library of the University of Tasmania, the State Archives Office, the Royal Society Archives, the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, the Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery, the State Library of Tasmania and in particular the Tasmaniana Library. The latter's staff members, Tony Marshal, Gillian Winter and Barbara Valentine (the latter now enjoying a well-earned retirement) all deserve individual mention for help beyond the call of duty.

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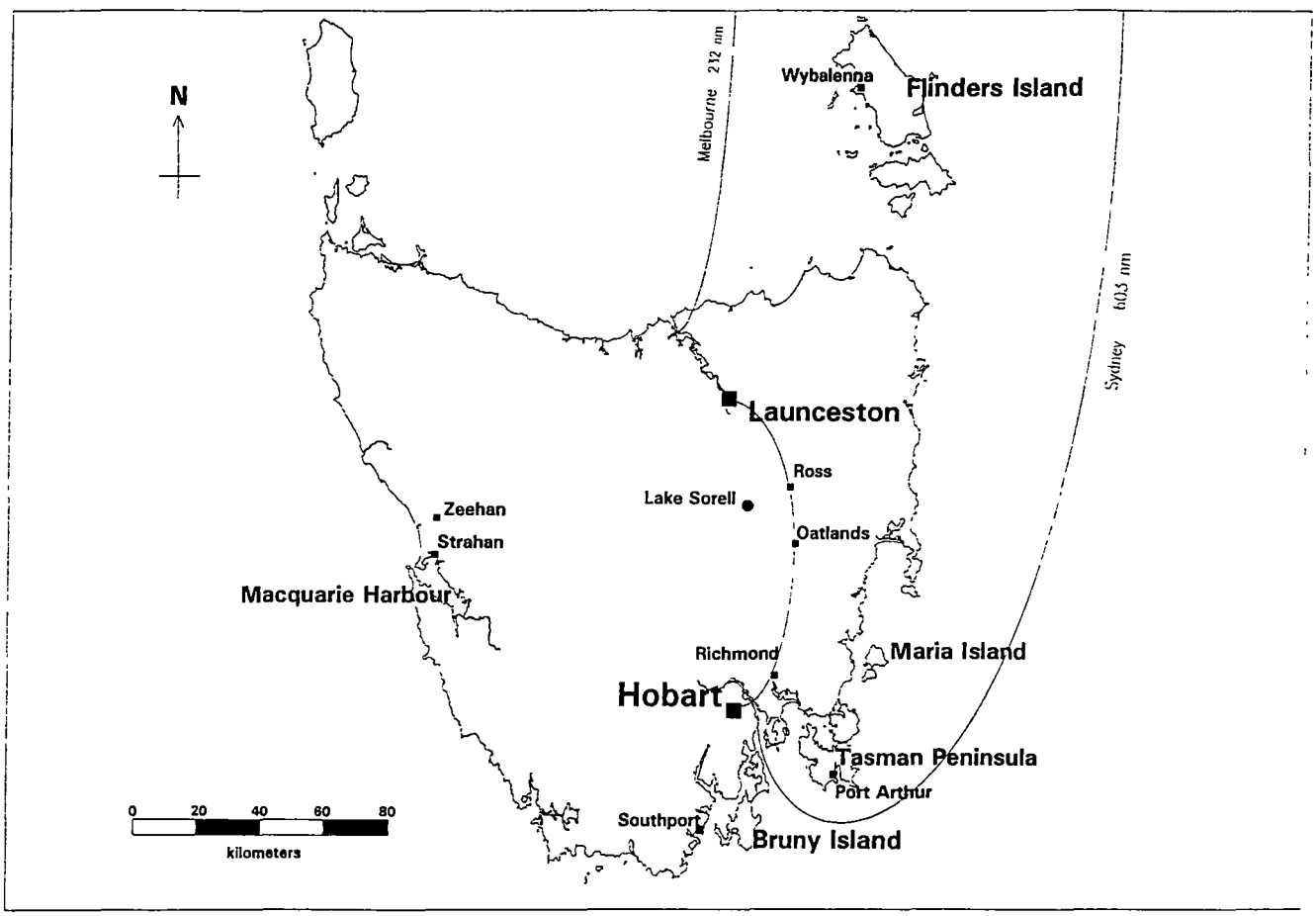
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ABC	Australian Broadcasting Commission
ANU	Australian National University
CO	Colonial Office
CEP	Commonwealth Employment Program
CSD	Chief Secretary's Department
DELM	Department of the Environment and Land Management
DNPW	Department of National Parks and Wildlife
HAJ	House of Assembly Journal
HCC	Hobart City Council
HEC	Hydro-Electric Commission
HITT	Historical Terrorists of Tasmania
ICOMOS	International Council on Monuments and Sites
JLC	Journal of the Legislative Council
JPP	Journals and Printed Papers (of Parliament)
LCC	Launceston City Council
MCC	Metropolitan City Council
MHA	Member of the House of Assembly
MLC	Member of the Legislative Council
NS	Non-State
PAT & PA	Port Arthur Tourist and Progress Association
P & P	Papers and Proceedings
PWD	Public Works Department
QVMAG	Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery
RPDT	Richmond Preservation and Development Association
RS	The Royal Society of Tasmania
SPB	Scenery Preservation Board
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats
TCP	Tasmanian Collection Pamphlet
TCPC	Town and Country Planning Commissioner
TDA	Tourism Development Authority
THRA	Tasmanian Historical Research Association
TLPC	Tasmaniana Library Postcard Collection
TMAG	Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery
TTA	Tasmanian Tourist Association
VDL	Van Diemen's Land

MAP OF TASMANIA



INTRODUCTION

Since the seventeenth century, men and women have been intrigued by relics from the past. More recently, a number of writers have sought to analyse this intrigue. Among the most prolific of them has been the English geographer, David Lowenthal, who, in *The Past Is a Foreign Country*, advanced the following half dozen 'seldom articulated' categories of past related benefits:

> familiarity and recognition; reaffirmation and validation; individual and group identity; guidance; enrichment; and escape.[1]

Against these 'benefits' obtained by "consumers" of the past may be placed the uses to which the past has been put by those who have mediated in its "supply". J H Plumb, the noted British historian, identified two broad categories of these, both of which 'only served the few'.[2] In the first place, the past was used to sanction authority and status.[3] In the second, it was used by religions, nations and classes 'in order to make the future which they were forecasting seem inevitable'.[4] Plumb held that the past as a construct to be used in these ways was dying. This was partly because post-war industrial society, geared towards change rather than conservation, did not need the past; and partly also because the rise in critical historiography had 'helped dissolve those simple, structural generalisations by which our forefathers interpreted the purpose of life in historical terms'. Plumb

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1 LOWENTHAL, D, 1985; *The Past Is a Foreign Country*; Cambridge University Press, 38. Lowenthal admitted that these categories were 'neither exhaustive nor logically coherent, [but] simply heuristic, a means of surveying the whole spectrum of what the past can do for us'. It may be assumed that aesthetic benefits of the past (the beauty of old artifacts, buildings and so forth) are embraced by the term 'enrichment' and that nostalgia, perhaps the most pervasive 'benefit' of the past, is subsumed by the term 'escape'.

2 PLUMB, J H, 1969; *The Death of the Past*; Macmillan & Co, London, 17. Plumb adds: 'The acquisition of the past by the ruling and possessing classes and the exclusion of the mass of the peasantry and labouring class is a widespread phenomenon through recorded time' (p30).

3 *Ibid.*, 28.

4 *Ibid.*, 98. Donald Horne echoes Plumb in commenting upon the use to which historical monuments have been put throughout Europe: '[F]rom the past, there are the great legitimating languages of religion and hereditary right; in modern times, there are the legitimating languages of nationalism, of economic growth, of social class, and of revolution – all of which turn the past to new purposes. In this sense there is a rhetoric of monuments, which can change with changes in the social order.' (HORNE, D, 1984; *The Great Museum*; Pluto, London, 2.)

applauded this 'critical, destructive', negative role of history,[5] but 'the greatest contribution that the historian can make', he believed, was positive:

> History can teach all who are literate about social change; even to tell the mere story of social change would be a valuable educational process in itself and help to fulfil a need in present society of which we are all aware.... We need to teach people to think historically about social change, to make them alert to the cunning of history which, as Lenin emphasised, always contains a quality of surprise.[6]

Plumb wrote these words in 1968. Since then the western world has seen an enormous burgeoning of what has been termed 'the heritage industry'.[7] Indeed, it would seem reasonable to assume that more Westerners gain their impressions of bygone times by means of heritage attractions than by any other means. It is therefore appropriate to ask, in the light of the theories propounded by Lowenthal and Plumb, two broad questions. In the first place, which of Lowenthal's categories of benefits are sought by clients of the heritage industry? In the second, to what use do heritage attractions put the packaged pasts which they display: to sanction the *status quo*; to vindicate a chosen destiny; or, as critical history, to teach about social change?

Before considering these questions, the nature of the term 'heritage industry' should itself be examined. The first part of the term, 'heritage', has generally accrued positive value-judgements. In 1991, G Davison described it as what 'we seek to conserve from the ravages of development and decay'.[8] That simple definition begs the question "why?", which P R Hay effectively answered in 1994: 'that which, inherited by the present from the past, gives meaning to the present. It is that which gives the present a context in history; which places the present on a past-present-future continuum that supplies life with identity and meaning.'[9]

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5 'The old past is dying, its force weakening, and so it should. Indeed, the historian should speed it on its way, for it was compounded of bigotry, of national vanity, of class domination.' (PLUMB, *op. cit.*, 145.)

6 *Ibid.*,144.

7 In the UK in 1987, the country boasted at least 41 Heritage Centres and 2,131 museums acceptable as such to the Museums Association. 1,750 of the latter replied to the association's questionnaire, the replies indicating that half of this number had been founded since 1971 (HEWISON, R, 1987; *The Heritage Industry: Britain in a Climate of Decline;* Methuen, London, 24). In the USA, the number of properties listed on the National Register of Historic Places rose between 1968 and 1985 from 1,200 to 37,000 (URRY, J, 1990; *The Tourist Gaze;* Sage, London, 106).

8 DAVISON, G, 1991; The Meanings of Heritage, in DAVISON, G and McCONVILLE, C (Eds), *A Heritage Handbook;* Allen & Unwin, North Sydney, 1-13.

9 HAY, P R, 1994; Heritage, History, Tourism: a Plea for the Primacy of Home, *Tasmanian Historical Studies* 4 (1), 36-38.

Yet the composite term 'heritage industry' has frequently attracted a negative press. England's foremost critic of the industry, Robert Hewison, writing in 1987, saw its growth as pointing to 'the imaginative death of [a] country ... gripped by the perception that it is in decline':

> The heritage industry is an attempt to dispel this climate of decline by exploiting the economic potential of our culture ... [but] far from ameliorating the climate of decline, it is actually worsening it. If the only thing we have to offer is an improved version of the past, then today can only be inferior to yesterday. Hypnotised by images of the past, we risk losing all capacity for creative change.[10]

The thrust of Hewison's complaint against the British heritage industry is based upon the fact that Britain has seemingly ceased to be the productive nation that it once was. Heritage sites, particularly industrial museums, have sprung up in areas where once industry thrived, but where now heritage attractions themselves have become the main sources of employment.

It has not always been so. The "inauthentic" heritage attractions which form the bulk of Britain's 41 heritage centres are of comparatively recent origin. In Australia, the first of such sites, Swan Hill Folk Museum, was opened as recently as 1963. Before the boom in the industry developed, heritage attractions were based, with few exceptions, at authentic historical sites,[11] sites 'conserved from the ravages of development and decay'. Did this make them more likely, in Hay's words, to 'give meaning to the present'?

The important point to bear in mind in weighing this question is that, in order to survive as economic entities, heritage attractions, authentic and inauthentic alike, have had to succeed in a market economy. Any decision which might have been taken to preserve an authentic site has inevitably been determined by economic considerations, just as much as has its ultimate exploitation. In the cases of sites which have not generated income but which have nevertheless been preserved primarily because of their perceived value to the tourist industry, economic considerations have still played their part. If a judgement is made that an old building will help draw tourists to an area where they will spend money, then an economic argument exists for its retention.

This thesis examines the development of the heritage industry in the small, insular Australian state of Tasmania. In doing so, it documents the conservation, exploitation, marketing and interpretation of all the state's significant historical

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10 HEWISON, *op. cit.*, 10.

11 But as Urry has pointed out, the concept of authenticity is itself problematic (URRY, *op. cit.*, 104).

sites until 1972, in which year there was a major shift in government policy on publicly-owned heritage management. The 'benefits' which have been sought by tourists in historical attractions have been analysed: here Lowenthal's categorisation has proved useful. Similarly, the motives of the owners and promoters of the attractions, both publicly- and privately-owned, have been considered in the light of Plumb's contrasting of the 'past' as 'created ideology with a purpose'[12] against 'history' as a truth-driven critical force which educates about social change. The "heritage values" of the sites themselves have also been considered, both in relation to visitors and in relation to Tasmanians. This has posed the question: to what extent have they fulfilled a positive purpose, and to what extent have they fallen within the ambit of Hewison's criticism of the British heritage sites that, in similar fashion, Tasmania's have diminished its inhabitants' 'capacity for creative change'?

Throughout this process, it has been impossible to avoid the view that the heritage sites themselves have served primarily as commodities, and it is the thrust of this thesis that above all other considerations and in spite of a welter of rhetoric, it has been market forces which have determined both which buildings have been preserved for the tourist industry, and how those buildings have been interpreted. The extent to which this has remained the case after 1972 must be left to further research to discover. In that year, the newly created branch of the public service, the Department of National Parks and Wildlife, assumed the management of the state's publicly-owned historical sites. This was accompanied by increased funding and the provision of hitherto unavailable expertise. I would contend that despite these, market forces still determine policy. It is likely that the tension between ideological and economic considerations which characterised the Tasmanian heritage industry throughout the present thesis' period of study continues to exist, though certainly possible that the consequent debate has moved to a higher plane.

The present work is in essence a history, but a history of an unusually hybrid kind. Because I have sought to examine how Tasmania's past has related to the tourist industry over a period of 116 years, that is from 1856 to 1972, I have found it necessary to delve into those aspects of the island's history which have been commodified in this way; and here contemporary secondary sources have provided the most useful combination of accuracy and objectivity. It has also been necessary to trace the development of the writing of history, particularly popular history, in Tasmania.[13] Where history has been interpreted by the arts, and here literature,

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12 PLUMB, *op. cit.*, 17.

13 A thorough history of Tasmanian historiography remains to be written. Although the present thesis is little more than a gesture in this direction,

theatre, painting, photography and film have all played a part, I have been led into cultural history. This has extended into a study of popular culture, where it has assumed a "historical" flavour. Since historical tourism has generally, though not invariably, been related to sites, I have traced the development of Tasmania as a tourist-historical landscape; hence environmental history is a feature of the work. So too is industrial and economic history, since historical tourism only exists as a sector of the tourism industry, and cannot adequately be described other than in relation to the industry as a whole. This has necessarily required a study of the part the industry has played over the years in Tasmania's economic life. And this in turn has led to administrative history, for, since the First World War, both the tourist industry itself and the management of the state's major historical sites have been in large measure the responsibilities of government.

There are four main reasons why Tasmania is well suited as the site for the present study. First, tourism has long been an important aspect of the island's economy.[14] Secondly, the island's history and its historical places have, throughout the period of study, both attracted tourists and been used to attract them.[15] Thirdly, it is widely acknowledged that proportionally far more nineteenth century structures have survived in Tasmania than elsewhere in the Commonwealth.[16] And fourthly, there is the history itself, a vexed, problematic history, which for many decades seemed to engulf the island's present, and which perhaps in some ways still does.[17]

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it is hoped that it might provide some useful material and perhaps even an incentive for such a study.

14 Anthony Trollope noted in 1872 that, 'Hobart Town ... [was] ... kept alive by visitors who flock[ed] to it in the summer months' (TROLLOPE, A, 1967; *Australia and New Zealand Volume 2;* University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, Queensland, 541). Recently, Simon Harris has argued that Tasmania was made 'a tourist state' in the period roughly 1912-28 (HARRIS, S, 1994; *Selling Tasmania: Boosterism and the Creation of the Tourist State 1912-1928;* unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Tasmania). And in 1994, in a private report commissioned by Tasmania's leading businesses, Richard Volpato of the Department of Sociology, University of Tasmania, found that nearly two-thirds of the 842 people interviewed believed that in ten years tourism would be the state's major employer.

15 Although no relevant statistical surveys were carried out during the study period, a 1983 survey of 200,000 visitors showed that 180,000 of them had a specific interest in visiting historical sites (MERCURY, 18 March 1983).

16 Chief among these sites is the Port Arthur site, Australia's pre-eminent symbol of the nineteenth century convict system. Although its presence dominates this study in much the same way as its particular problems dominated the development of historical tourism in Tasmania, ample scope remains for a full study to be devoted to the post-convict history of this site alone.

17 When the historian, Kay Daniels, remarked in 1983 that 'Tasmania is a society which is still uncomfortable with its convict past, which sees its history as in some ways a shameful inheritance' (DANIELS, K, 1983;

Nevertheless, it has been the troubled convict past particularly which has attracted tourists. This has provided Tasmanians with a dilemma to which they have responded in a variety of ways, including denial, romanticisation, sensationalism, rationalisation and the practice of laying stress upon other, preferred, pasts – most notably "the pioneer past". This complex of attitudes has, as might be expected, held implications for the conservation of Tasmania's built heritage.

The diversity and wealth of data available from this wide field of study has proved a heady brew indeed. The better to make sense of it, a chronological narrative approach has been adopted.

Chapter 1 examines the state of Tasmania in the years following the granting of responsible government in 1856. As the newly independent colony struggled to give the impression that it had freed itself from the yoke of its penal days, so an embryonic tourist industry began to develop. The first guide books were published, and while Tasmanian authors attempted to provide within them a sanitised view of their past, publicists from Victoria had no such scruples. They recognised and were quite happy to pander to the stirrings of interest in the island's convict past. The publication in 1870 of Martin Cash's autobiography and of the hugely successful *His Natural Life* in 1874 further whetted appetites. Three years later, the penal settlements of Tasman Peninsula, principally the notorious Port Arthur, were abandoned. The response from tourists, mainly Tasmanians, was immediate and overwhelming. It heralded the advent of a new branch of the tourist industry, historical tourism.

Chapter 2 covers the years of the mineral boom which had its beginning in 1878. As communications between Tasmania and the mainland improved and a rail network spread across the island, so tourism grew in importance as an industry. Many tourist guides were published and they reflected the increasingly divergent attitude towards the past. For the optimistic establishment, Tasmania had no past, only a future. Popularly, however, the sensationalised and romanticised convict past was increasingly attractive. It featured in novels, plays and exhibitions which were spectacularly successful. Against this background, Port Arthur (renamed Carnarvon) grew into a tourist town, its entire economy bound up with the demand from tourists to inspect the convict ruins. While other convict and a few non-convict

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Cults of Nature, Cults of History, *Island Magazine* **16**, 3-8), she was merely noting what many others had said, both before and since. For instance, the drowning hero of Richard Flanagan's 1994 Tasmanian novel, *Death of a River Guide*, is continually haunted by ghosts of his convict ancestors. 'The past is a nightmare and I want to wake up and I can't' is his Joycean conclusion (FLANAGAN, R, 1994; *Death of a River Guide*; McPhee Gribble, Ringwood, Victoria, 264).

historical sites made an appearance on the tourist itinerary, they did comparatively little to generate income, and were not widely publicised.

During the years 1893 to 1914, covered in Chapter 3, the advertisement of Tasmania as a tourist state was coordinated by the Tasmanian Tourist Association. This profoundly conservative body flourished in a period of heightened local patriotism. While avoiding the promotion of the island's convict relics, it attempted to generate local pride by inculcating interest in a jingoistic version of the past. Meanwhile, tourism to Port Arthur flourished despite its old buildings being devastated by fire. In general, government neglect of both the tourist industry and historic relics characterised the period. Many of the latter were deteriorating, and suffering at the hands of vandals. The government refused to take action until 1914 when it was faced with the choice of either purchasing key buildings at Port Arthur or having them demolished. For clear economic reasons, it chose the former course.

Chapter 4 covers the years 1915 to 1934, years of economic decline, which nevertheless saw the creation of a government-run tourist bureau, and the creation of the Scenery Preservation Board, which was empowered to recommend land for proclamation as the state's scenic or historic reserves. Port Arthur's main buildings were reserved by government on the recommendation of this board, which was entrusted with their management. The site continued to be the state's major tourist attraction. Physically, however, the buildings continued to deteriorate, and their management was neglected.

In Chapter 5, the period 1935 to 1945 is covered. This period saw a huge boost to Tasmania's tourist industry, driven by Albert Ogilvie's Labor Government. Throughout the period, divergent attitudes towards the past persisted. Many, uncomfortable with the convict past, joined forces to commemorate an alternative past, the past of the pioneers. Yet tourist interest in the convict past could not be denied, and gradually Tasmanians found ways in which to come to terms with that past themselves. Meanwhile, many of Tasmania's old buildings were crumbling, and many movable historical relics were known to be leaving the state. While this was widely deplored, both because of the loss to the tourist industry of assets and because of the loss to Tasmanians of heritage, there was a general lack of legislation, money and will to halt the process.

In the years between 1946 and 1959, which are covered in Chapter 6, tourism continued to rise in economic importance, but was neglected by a state government with an almost exclusive commitment to industrial growth based upon hydro-industrialisation. Protection of the state's built heritage was still in the hands of the

Scenery Preservation Board, which continued to be grossly underfunded for the increased responsibilities it now carried. Foremost among these was still the Port Arthur complex, which was systematically acquired by the state after 1947. The conservation, management and interpretation of this site continued to be bedevilled with muddles and delays. The Board's major acquisition of the period, Entally House, helped promote the state's pioneer past. After early teething troubles it rivalled Port Arthur in popularity. Few other sites of significance were acquired, and substantial sums of money only spent on those with tourist appeal.

In 1959, the provision of a large car ferry between Melbourne and northern Tasmania and of cheap air fares to the state resulted in a tourism boom throughout the 1960s. These years are covered in Chapter 7. This period was also characterised by an accelerating loss of old buildings which prompted the formation of a local branch of the National Trust in 1960. Initially, this body concentrated its efforts on the acquisition and restoration of grand Georgian houses much like Entally. Meanwhile developers continued to demolish Tasmania's venerable buildings at an alarming rate. A preservation fund administered by the National Trust and slightly tougher legislation introduced in 1967 did little to halt the trend. Local authorities were reluctant to issue preservation orders, and "development" was seen as a necessary price to pay for "progress". Without adequate heritage legislation, the best argument for the protection of old structures continued to be their "touristic value". Cultural significance of the structures was rarely considered until the Department of National Parks and Wildlife was set up in 1972; then, gradually, the issue was addressed.

* * *

Given the broad canvas of this thesis, research has drawn on a wide variety of sources. Much use has been made of the numerous tourist guide books which began to appear in Tasmania in 1869; these have indicated the attitudes of the suppliers of historical tourist attractions. The other side of the picture, the anticipations and responses of the tourists themselves, have been gleaned from the many accounts, some of them unpublished, provided by visitors. The press has been a valuable source throughout the period covered; and the many scrapbooks held by the Tasmanian Archives, some of them prepared by the Tasmanian Government Tourist Department, have saved many hours of tedious searching. The minute books and correspondence of the Scenery Preservation Board (1916 to 1971) and its various sub-committees have permitted a greater insight into this flawed and underfunded organisation than would have been likely had it been a fully professional branch of the public service rather than a policy-making committee employing a handful of staff. Certainly the fully-professional government tourist departments, which

operated under a variety of official titles from 1914 onwards, left little trace of their deliberations other than reports which were published annually as parliamentary papers. Correspondence files, notes and minute books of the non-government organisations which have made their contribution to Tasmania's heritage industry, such as the National Trust, the Tasmanian Society and the 50,000 League, have proved valuable sources, particularly since the enthusiastic volunteers who ran them generally had a far keener eye for posterity than did their counterparts in the public service.

Finally, in a work which is substantially about heritage sites, it is important that terminology should be as precise as possible. Those who drew up the Burra Charter were aware of the dangers of ambiguity inherent in the language of conservation. Accordingly, they agreed upon a set of definitions for key terms. Except where such terms are contained in quotations from the work of others, these definitions have been adopted in what follows. The terms covered are: place, cultural significance, fabric, conservation, maintenance, preservation, restoration, reconstruction, adaptation and compatible use. Article 1 of the Burra Charter, which contains the definitions of these terms, is reproduced in Appendix I.[18]

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18 In 1979, Australia ICOMOS met in the South Australian town of Burra, and adopted the *Australia ICOMOS charter for the conservation of places of cultural significance*. This document was given the short title of the *Burra Charter* (MARQUIS-KYLE, P and WALKER, M (Eds), 1992; *The Illustrated Burra Charter*; Australia ICOMOS, Sydney).

CHAPTER 1: THE FOUNDATIONS OF AN INDUSTRY, 1856 TO 1877

1.1 LIVING ON THE RELICS OF THE PAST

The first British settlement on the island of Van Diemen's Land was established at Risdon on the Derwent River in 1803. The following year, the capital, Hobart Town, was founded on the site of present day Hobart, near the mouth of the river. For the next fifty years, the island was administered essentially as a penal colony. Approximately 73,000 convicts were transported to Tasmania. Free settlement was also encouraged, so that by 1851, out of a population of approximately 70,000, only approximately 20,000 were convicts.[1] Over the same period, the island's Aboriginal population of some 7,000 was reduced, particularly during the 1830s, largely as a consequence of an episode known as the Black War. By 1847, only 47 tribal Aborigines remained, confined to a hostel south of Hobart.

Since 1825, Van Diemen's Land had been an independent colony, administered by a governor and a small Legislative Council. From the late 1840s, there was growing pressure to have transportation ended and representational government granted. At first, this was strenuously resisted, but in 1853 the British government gave way, and convict transportation to Van Diemen's Land was ceased. Three years later, the colony was granted self-government under its new name, Tasmania.

For the new and proudly independent people a potent symbol was required, one that would proclaim to the world that, despite its sordid past, the island was now the epitome of prosperity, respectability and progress. Such a symbol was provided by the new Government House, built between 1854 and 1857. Ironically, the final decisive step which led to its building was taken by Governor Denison, who, throughout his tenure, had resolutely opposed the ending of transportation. In 1854, he despatched to London the plans for a new vice-regal residence which had been drawn up for Governor Franklin a decade earlier.[2] At that time, lack of finance had prevented the building of more than the foundations, but Denison argued that now the old dilapidated Government House, which only buttresses prevented from collapsing, was in need of such major repairs that the erection of a new building could be delayed no longer. Denison claimed that the whole undertaking would result in a nett benefit to the

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1 ROBSON, L, 1983; *A History of Tasmania Volume 1*; Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 467.

2 CO 280/322: Denison to Grey, 1 December 1854.

colony to the tune of some £70,000.[3] The reality was different and the project was in fact completed only with the aid of two £20,000 loans authorised by Acts of Parliament in 1856 and 1858.[4]

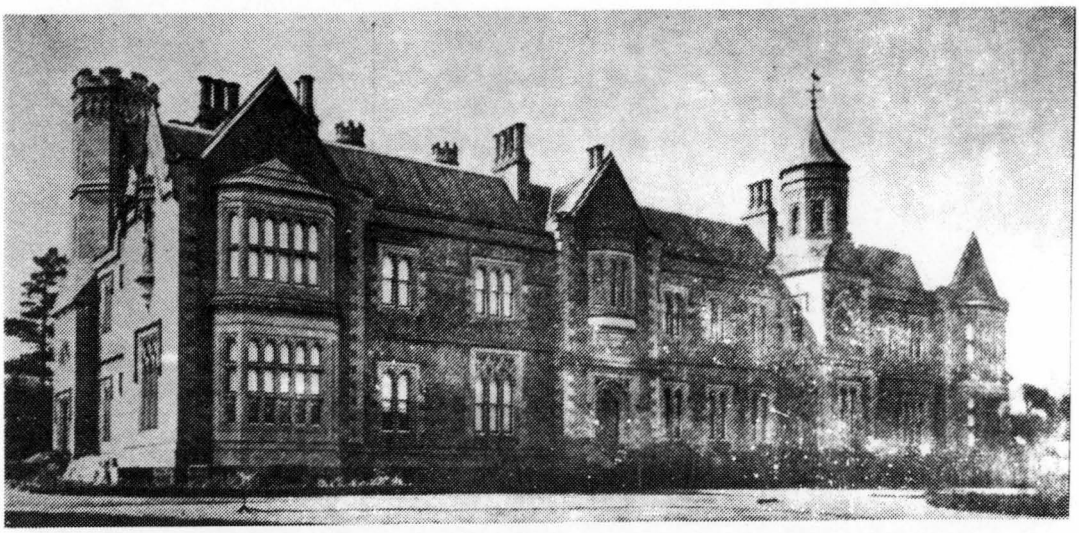

FIGURE 1.1

GOVERNMENT HOUSE, HOBART

But the building itself was generally regarded as magnificent. Even Anthony Trollope, who spent a month in the colony in 1872, in an otherwise negative depiction, described the building as 'acknowledged to be the best [Government House] belonging to any British colony'.[5] It was the jewel in the crown of Tasmania's post-transportation architecture, and it did not stand alone. Over the next five years, the new Supreme Court, the Royal Society Museum and the Town Hall were built in Hobart. Several new buildings were also erected in Launceston, in the colony's north: 1859 saw the completion of a suite of public offices, in 1860 the Mechanics Institute was opened and in 1864 the Town Hall. For each of these projects, Parliament raised further loans which greatly increased the debt burden of Tasmania's fragile economy.[6]

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3 Denison costed the new structure at approximately £43,000, and had the land upon which the old Government House was built valued at £123,000. In reality, the cost of the new building blew out to nearly £68,000, and in 1856 it was estimated that sale of lands on the site of the old Government House would fetch only £27,000 (JLC 1863/3, 7 and JLC 1856/18).

4 20 Vict. No 20 and 22 Vict. No 36.

5 TROLLOPE, *op. cit.*, 531.

6 Acts of Parliament authorising loans for public building purposes, 1856-1860: 20 Vict. No 20, 22 Vict. No 36, 22 Vict. No 38, 23 Vict. No 40.

The new buildings served as symbols of status. In them was reflected the new-found optimism of the colony's middle classes, those sections of the population which believed that in the past the only bar to the island's progress was its role as a dumping ground for British convicts. But the ending of transportation had another effect, one which Tasmanians were much more reluctant to admit. For with it came the withdrawal not only of British subsidy amounting to £350,000 annually, but also of the plentiful supply of free labour which the island had relied upon since 1804. The effects of this were everywhere apparent, and did not escape the observant eye of Trollope:

> It seems hard to say of a new colony, not yet seventy years old, that it has seen the best of its days, and that it is falling into decay, that its short period of importance in the world is already gone, and that for the future it must exist, – as many an old town and country do exist, – not exactly on the memory of the past, but on the relics which the past has left behind it.[7]

Manifestations of the 'decay' perceived by Trollope were to be seen everywhere. In the country, 'half the houses were shut up and deserted, and acre upon acre of old wheat-land abandoned to mimosa scrub'.[8] In the country town of Richmond, the commodities for sale in the general stores would have 'been eligible for admission into a museum of antiquities'.[9] In Hobart, the only vehicles to be seen were 'a few ante-diluvian-looking broughams';[10] the Hobart to Launceston coach was not one of the new American patterns introduced to Australia by Cobb & Co., but built 'after that ancient and most uncomfortable English pattern which [those] who are old remember'.[11] And just outside the capital in Lenah Valley, under the shadow of Mount Wellington, stood the 'fast-perishing structure' of the colony's first museum.[12] Erected in 1842 as a temple to science by the then Governor's wife, Lady Jane Franklin, this rare example of Colonial Greek Classical architecture had failed to achieve the support hoped for by its founder. As a consequence it was abandoned, and in 1870 its glass skylight and door were smashed, and on the crumbling shingle roof grew 'mosses, lichens, thistles – things which flourish on desolation and decay'.[13]

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7 TROLLOPE, *op. cit.*, 487.

8 DILKE, C, 1868; *Greater Britain: a Record of Travel in English Speaking Countries During 1866 & 1867 Volume 2*; MacMillan & Co, London, 94.

9 THOMAS, H, 1869; *Guide to Excursionists between Australia and Tasmania*; Melbourne, 163.

10 *Ibid.*, 132.

11 TROLLOPE, *op. cit.*, 521.

12 ANON, 1871; *Walch's Tasmanian Guide Book*; Walch, Hobart, 66.

13 THOMAS, H, 1870; *Guide to Excursionists between Australia and Tasmania*; Melbourne, 179.

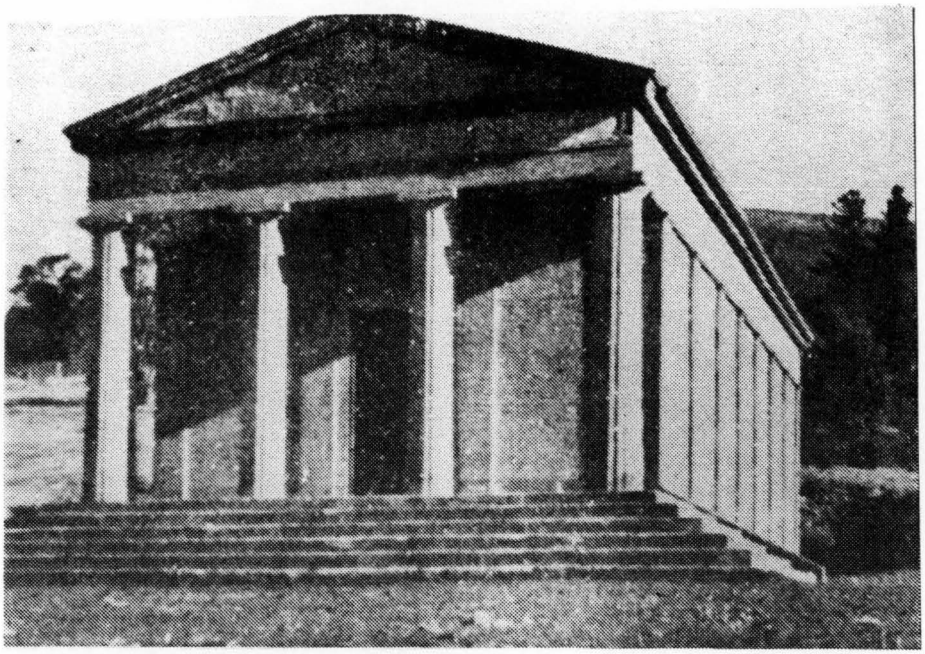

FIGURE 1.2

LADY FRANKLIN MUSEUM

The colony's deep depression was also reflected in its people. In the first place, there was a general lack of young men.[14] Many had left the colony during the Victorian gold rushes of 1854 to 1858 and had simply failed to return. But even after the rushes had ended, brighter prospects in the mainland colonies continued to attract, and the exodus went on. While the Tasmanian population remained stagnant at about 100,000 during the 1860s and 1870s, the number of paupers living in charitable institutions rose dramatically. In 1866, there were 486 male inmates. The number rose to 681 in 1871, the year when 'commercial and colonial prosperity was at zero', fell slightly, then rose to 806 in 1876.[15] In addition, in 1869 there were 300 residents, male and female, at the Lunatic Asylum situated in New Norfolk, 500 children at the Orphan School in New Town and many other institutionalised women and children.[16] The welfare of the colony's many dependents put further strains on the public purse.[17]

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14 On the streets of Hobart, there was 'no appearance of young men' (THOMAS, H, 1869, *op. cit .*, 132). After a visit to Richmond, the author of this guide book was moved to ask: 'where are the young men of Tasmania? I saw ten of the male residents of the town, and of these eight were far advanced in life' (*ibid.*, 163).

15 MERCURY, 21 July 1876; *Editorial.*

16 THOMAS, 1869, *op. cit.*, 54.

17 'Tasmania spent more on prisons and charitable institutions than any of the other colonies. Such expenditure accounted for 17 per cent of the budget in 1866; a year earlier New South Wales devoted only 6 per cent and Victoria only 4 per cent of their respective budgets to prisons and

Under the circumstances, the prevalent mood in Tasmania was gloom-laden. 'I never found myself among a people so prone to condemn themselves as these Tasmanians', wrote Trollope.[18] The epithet "Sleepy Hollow", which he is commonly accused of applying to the island colony, was in fact an example of such self-condemnation.[19] The locals will tell you, wrote Henry Thomas in 1869, that Tasmania 'is not what it used to be; and you hear tales about the convict times, and the Port Philip times, and the gold fever times'.[20] A year later, Marcus Clarke also found regretful allusions to past glories to be common among Tasmanian settlers, who, he claimed, all pretended to have ruined themselves by the abolition of transportation.[21]

To some the answer lay in annexation, visiting Victorians often being told: "'You have sucked the life out of us, and now you must annex us to your country, that is, if after all, we can submit to be annexed.'"[22] In 1868, Dilke found annexation to be 'a measure strongly wished for by a considerable party' in both Tasmania and Victoria,[23] and seven years later, the wish was still prevalent in Launceston.[24] A verse published at about this time well summed up the frustrations of the age:

> The clank of chains – the measured tread,
> The rumbling go-cart – yellow dress,
> Have passed! and now thou hast instead
> Free population in distress,
> Whose wails resound along thy shore
> For days that will return no more.[25]

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charities.' (REYNOLDS, H, 1969; That Hated Stain: The Aftermath of Transportation in Tasmania, *Historical Studies* 14 (53), 19-31.)

18 TROLLOPE, *op. cit.*, 504n. The note explains that the sentence quoted exists only in Trollope's manuscript, and was omitted from the published book.

19 'Now the Tasmanians declare themselves to be ruined, and are not slow to let a stranger know that the last new name given to the island is that of "Sleepy Hollow".' (*Ibid.*, 503.)

20 THOMAS, 1869, *op. cit.*, 133. The reference to 'Port Philip times' alludes to the founding of Victoria by the Tasmanian residents, John Batman and John Pascoe Fawkner in 1835.

21 WILDING, M (Ed.), 1976; *The Portable Marcus Clarke;* University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, Queensland, 520.

22 THOMAS, 1869, *op. cit.*, 133.

23 DILKE, *op. cit.*, 101.

24 HILL, R & F, 1875; *What We Saw in Australia;* MacMillan, London, 411.

25 MERCURY, 2 May 1971; *Mr Marcus Clarke on Tasmania.*

1.2 THE HATED STAIN

Despite the ambivalent attitude towards the past captured in the preceding verse, middle class Tasmanians felt the need to proclaim loudly that their island had undergone a sea change since the abolition of transportation.

William Faulkner has claimed that it is 'not courthouses nor even churches but jails [that are] the true records of a ... community's history'.[26] If this is so, then the new representative government of Tasmania was doing far more in 1857 when it ordered the demolition of the old Imperial Gaol in central Hobart than simply destroying a building; it was carrying out a symbolic denial of the colony's entire convict past. Over the following two decades, this denial permeated all aspects of Tasmanian society. Convict records were destroyed and mutilated and 'active disinformation was peddled to the rising generation'.[27]

Yet denial flew in the face of the facts. In 1857, 50 per cent of all adults and 60 per cent of adult males were convicts or ex-convicts.[28] One reason for so many emancipists remaining in Tasmania is to be found in Victoria's *Convicts Prevention Act, 1852*. This required any new arrival from Tasmania to prove that he was unconditionally free or face three years hard labour in irons.[29] According to Dilke, it was vigilance such as this on the part of the free colonies which explained why Tasmania had never been able to get rid of its convict population to any great degree.[30] In 1866, ten years after the granting of representative government, it has been estimated that convicts and emancipists formed between

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26 FAULKNER, W, 1975; *Intruder in the Dust*; Penguin, Harmondsworth, UK, 49. Faulkner's justification for his claim seems particularly relevant to the history of an island that was for its first fifty years essentially one huge prison. The sentence quoted continues: '... since not only the cryptic forgotten initials and words and even phrases cries of defiance and indictment scratched into the walls but the very bricks and stones themselves held, not in solution but in suspension, intact and biding and potent and indestructible, the agonies and shames and griefs with which hearts long since unmarked and unremembered dust had strained and burst'.

27 ROBSON, L, 1991; *A History of Tasmania Volume 2*; Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 72.

28 *Statistics of Tasmania*, 1857. For these statistics, and for those which follow, I am indebted to Henry Reynolds' essay, *That Hated Stain* (see note 17).

29 HUGHES, R, 1987; *The Fatal Shore*; Collins Harvill, London, 567.

30 'The conditional pardons granted to prisoners in ... Tasmania generally contain words permitting the convict to visit any portion of the world except the British isle, but the clause is a mere dead letter, for none of our free colonies will receive even our pardoned convicts.' (DILKE, *op. cit.*, 99-100.)

30 and 40 per cent of the male population. They committed 70 per cent of the colony's serious crime and accounted for 94 per cent of invalids, 89 per cent of prisoners, 85 per cent of paupers, 84 per cent of lunatics and almost 60 per cent of patients at Hobart Hospital.[31] In 1875, the final year in which the statistics are available in this form, convicts and ex-convicts still represented 85 per cent of paupers, 56 per cent of 'lunatics and idiot children', 70 per cent of prisoners and 53 per cent of patients at Hobart and Launceston Hospitals.[32]

Trollope found the convict records in Tasmania to be 'recent, fresh, and ever present'. Moreover, there was still felt the necessity of adhering to a social rule 'that no convict, whatever may have been his success, shall be received into society'.[33] This was even the case when the society in question was as primitive as that of the pioneering settlements on the northwest coast. Here, it was found in 1878 by the future Premier of Tasmania, Edward Braddon, that those who were convicts once must remain under suspicion to the end of their days:

> Young Tasmania cannot forgive those of a former generation who bear the convict brand, cannot believe any sort of good of them ... and always delights to think and speak ill of them.[34]

The class relations of the convict era were also enshrined in an early piece of legislation passed by the new representative Parliament, *The Masters and Servants Act 1854*. This Act permitted any member of the master's family to place a servant in custody for an alleged offence. The servant could then be held for a week before coming to trial. When, in 1882, an attempt was made to revoke the right of the master to arrest his servant, the Legislative Council overwhelmingly opposed the move.[35] As Trollope observed, the convict system had 'created a taste for slavery which [had] not lost its relish on the palate of many Tasmanians'.[36] Such was the colony of Tasmania that was being discovered by tourists in the years following independence.

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31 *Statistics of Tasmania*, 1866, 92-101 and 1867, 99-111. Quoted in REYNOLDS, *op. cit.*

32 *Statistics of Tasmania*, 1875, xviii.

33 TROLLOPE, *op. cit.*, 505.

34 BRADDON, E N C, 1878; A Home in the Colonies, *Statesman* **27** (October). Quoted in REYNOLDS, *op. cit.*

35 REYNOLDS, *op. cit.*

36 TROLLOPE, *op. cit.*, 501.

1.3 IMAGES OF TASMANIA

1.3.1 The official version

As early as 1856, the influx of summer visitors to Hobart, their numbers boosted by the recent provision of steam communications with Sydney and Melbourne, had been noted.[37] Soon, the temperate island was promoting itself as "The Sanatorium of the South" and actively seeking the patronage of wealthy visitors from the mainland of Australia. Fifteen years later, tourists had become an important enough factor economically for the claim to be made that they kept Hobart alive during the summer months.[38]

While Tasmania's main attractions for visitors were its cool summer climate, its "Englishness" and its much vaunted scenery, its architecture also appealed, particularly to Melbournians, whose home town had been so hastily thrown up. By contrast, the Georgian stone buildings of Hobart had:

> a square, solid and substantial look ... suggestive of permanence and comfort. They seemed to say, "Look at us! we were not run up, by a speculative contractor, the week before last; and we have no intention of tumbling down the week after next.[39]

They also looked old. There was about them 'a sufficiently antiquated appearance ... to carry [one] back half a century'.[40] To the Victorian tourist, coming from a colony where everything was 'so new, bright, fresh and glaring ... the mellow tone of [Hobart's] red-brick houses, the hollows in the pavement and the door-steps, worn by the feet of two generations, and the half obliterated figures on the sign-boards [struck] as belonging to the past ... entirely unlike anything [seen] in or around Melbourne'.[41]

And there were also, of course, other material traces which told a different, less comfortable, story of the island's past. They were everywhere, and the visitor

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37 'Since the opening of steam communications to Sydney, and the more constant regular trips to Victoria, Hobarton has had an influx of visitors; principally during the summer months, when the Tasmanian climate offers a most grateful change from those cities.' (STONEY, H B, 1856; *A Residence in Tasmania*; Smith, Elder & Co., London, 154.)

38 'Tasmanians acknowledge it to be a fact that Tasmania is going to mischief ... Hobart Town, they say, is kept alive by visitors who flock to it for the summer months from the other colonies.' (TROLLOPE, *op. cit.*, 541.)

39 THOMAS, 1869, *op. cit.*, 107.

40 *Ibid.*, 88.

41 *Ibid.*, 107.

could not but be aware of them. For instance, throughout the length of the Main Road from Launceston to Hobart, along which almost all visitors travelled, there still stood old prisoners' camps: 'ruined walls of stone or of sods: some with the roof still remaining, and showing traces of courtyards and cells ... but all abandoned'.[42] And if the unwanted convict buildings could be demolished or allowed to moulder, there remained the road itself. Unlike the generally awful Australian roads of the late nineteenth century, the Main Road, 'which was as good as any road in England', was itself made by convict labour and 'never would ... have been made without it'.[43]

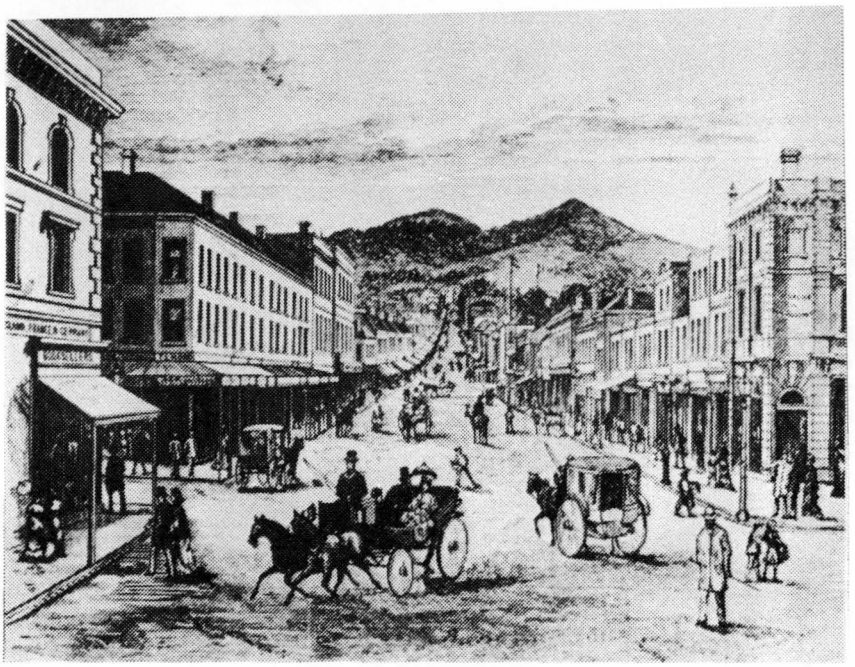

FIGURE 1.3

"OLD" HOBART, C1856

Until 1869, tourists to Tasmania had available to them only oral advice on how to plan their tours and how to interpret the island. In that year, Henry Thomas produced the first tourists' guide book to the colony. A Victorian, Thomas lacked the islanders' sensitivity toward their convict past. Clearly conscious that his readers would be aware of, indeed likely to be fascinated by, this aspect of Tasmania, his book abounds with references to it, some sensational, some – such as the following – expressing a grandiloquent sympathy:

> Poor prisoners! much as ye had to answer for, we will not withhold one thought of pity for the forced labour ye endured to make our journey lighter. Terrible as was the discipline these men are said to have suffered under, it is little to be wondered at if they, some of them, attempted to escape; yet as we look at

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42 THOMAS, 1869, *op. cit.*, 86.

43 TROLLOPE, *op. cit.*, 528 & 530.

> the boundless sullen mountains – untenanted, save by a few wild beasts, and affording scant food fit for human sustenance – what a desperate and wretched alternative was that of a "bolter". For he was then an outlaw, and lived between fear of starvation in the bush, or a bullet from the first man he met. Many a runaway convict has thus perished in seeking to escape the cruelties inflicted by such officers as John Price, whose memory I find is still execrated by some of his old Tasmanian acquaintances, and his murderers at Williamstown excused.[44]

Thomas' guide may usefully be compared with the first to be written by a Tasmanian and published within Tasmania. This was *Walch's Tasmanian Guide Book*, which appeared in 1871. It was written anonymously by the painter, botanist and poet, Louisa Anne Meredith.

In general, *Walch's Guide* concentrates upon Tasmania's scenic beauty, but it also catalogues the island's architectural gems. Among these, it includes not only the recent public buildings and the churches of Hobart and Launceston, but those other symbols of social status, the numerous mansions which crowned the vast estates owned by the colony's ruling class, the "Wool-kings" of the Midlands.[45] In describing the route between Bridgewater, some twenty kilometres north of Hobart, and Launceston, Meredith listed over 120 such estates and identified their owners.[46] With the exceptions of Mount Pleasant (1870) and the palatial Mona Vale (1868), these stone residences were built between 1818 and the late 1840s, with heavy reliance upon convict labour. The latter fact Meredith did not mention.

Indeed, *Walch's Guide* manages almost entirely to avoid mention of the convict past, even in its 12-page *Epitome of the History of Tasmania*. Here, the author contented herself with describing 'discovery' and 'settlement' followed by brief details of the governors who had served between 1804 and 1871. It was not until she arrived at Governor Denison that she seemed compelled to mention how he 'resolutely resisted the efforts of the colony to shake off the detested burden of the transportation system'.[47]

Other allusions to convictism in this guide book are rare, though a few "bushranger stories" are told, bushranging being the one aspect of Tasmania's convict past with sufficient inherent romanticism to overcome the usual restraints. Although most of Van Diemen's Land's bushrangers lived brief,

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44 THOMAS, 1869, *op. cit.*, 86-87.

45 ANON, *op. cit.*, 148.

46 *Ibid.*, 140-148.

47 *Ibid.*, 21.

obscure and inglorious lives, a few captured the public imagination from the earliest days of settlement.[48] Even those authors of tourist literature who endeavoured to avoid all reference to the island's convict past found it hard to resist mention of at least one armed (and probably romanticised) desperado of the bush.

Meredith's remaining reference to convicts was in relation to their role in building the Bridgewater Causeway. Although scarcely likely to attract attention today, this structure caused 'quite a stir' when built, illustrations of it even appearing in the London press.[49] It consists of a platform of earth and stone thrown some four fifths of the way across the Derwent River, at this point about half a kilometre wide. Between 1831 and 1836, up to 600 convicts at a time laboured to complete it.[50] References to it in tourist guides and general travel writing on Tasmania were common in the nineteenth century. Trollope referred to it, as did H Thomas in 1869 and in subsequent editions of his guide.

The latter appeared in 1870 and 1873, then not until 1879. In these editions, Thomas included articles by Tasmanian contributors, such as the amateur geologist, S H Wintle. And so, seemingly in deference to Tasmanian sensibilities, the tone of the work began to change. In 1873, a *Brief Epitome of the History of Tasmania* was added, which, like that of Louisa Anne Meredith, managed to omit all mention of convicts except for references to 'prisoners' among the first party of colonisers, and to the numbers of armed bushrangers who after 1816 'spread terror around'.[51] The 1873 edition also included the following passage, which was retained in each edition until 1885:

> A very short visit amongst Tasmanians will do much to disabuse the mind from the absurd prejudices which exist with many, who cannot forget – or *disremember*, as an Irishman

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48 For instance, Bent's account of the blood-stained career of the notorious Michael Howe (BENT, A, 1818; *Michael Howe, the Last and Worst of the Bushrangers of Van Diemen's Land*; Hobart Town) was the first work of general literature to appear in Australia. And in 1829, a Scottish migrant to Tasmania, David Burn, penned the first Australian play, *The Bushranger* (BURN, D, 1971; *The Bushranger*; Heineman Educational, Melbourne), which was presented shortly afterwards in Burn's native Edinburgh. Thereafter, almost all books written on Van Diemen's Land included references to bushranging, Bonwick's 1856 volume, *The Bushrangers*, proving a definitive and enduring work (BONWICK, J, 1856; *The Bushrangers*; George Robertson, Melbourne).

49 MOORE-ROBINSON, J, 1937; *Historical Brevities of Tasmania*; Tasmanian Government Tourist Bureau, Hobart, 27.

50 ANON, *op. cit.*, 97.

51 THOMAS, H, 1873; *Guide to Excursionists between Australia and Tasmania*; Melbourne, unnumbered pages.

> would say – the antecedents of the colony. The people are proverbially hospitable, and there is an entire absence of anything likely to recall the fearful ordeal through which the colony has passed.[52]

But while the writers of the guide books available to tourists during the 1870s attempted to conceal the convict past, believing this to be in the best interest of Tasmania's free-born inhabitants, other writers with other motives had no such scruples. They knew that strong drama was to be found among the themes of convictism, and they discerned a ready market for such work. Two books in particular appeared, both enormously influential in the shaping of attitudes towards the convict past, both purporting to be based upon fact. They were the autobiography of the bushranger, Martin Cash, and *His Natural Life* by Marcus Clarke.

1.3.2 The counter view

The autobiography of Martin Cash, possibly Van Diemen's Land's best known bushranger, was published in 1870.[53] At the time Cash was living in retirement on a small farm in Glenorchy just north of Hobart.

Cash was originally transported from Ireland to Botany Bay for shooting a man who was competing for the affections of his lover. Subsequently, he was implicated in a number of crimes, of which – if he is to be believed – he was completely innocent. He was apprehended in Van Diemen's Land in 1842 and sentenced to six years hard labour at Port Arthur.[54] Cash's book devotes a chapter to his brief incarceration there, then details his escape in the company of Kavenagh and Jones. Several chapters subsequently cover the bushranging exploits of the trio, which culminated, after two adventurous years, in their recapture. The final chapters of the book are set in Norfolk Island, to which penal colony Cash was finally sentenced.

The bushranging adventures which are at the heart of the book form an extraordinarily repetitive collection. Told in a style which smacks more than a little of self-congratulation, they spare no effort to stress the bushrangers' courage and fairness and their chivalry towards women. The prime targets for

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52 THOMAS, 1873, *op. cit.*, 24.

53 CASH, M, 1870; *Martin Cash, the Bushranger of Van Diemen's Land in 1843*; J Walch & Sons, Hobart.

54 *Ibid.*, 45-46.

the gang were the wealthy Midlands graziers whose Georgian mansions were to be included in the first tourist guides as symbols of the colony's stylishness and prosperity. Cash portrayed their owners almost without exception as blustering cowards. Alongside the equally cowardly and inept constables, the prejudiced magistrates, the corrupt overseers and the sadistic penal station officials, they are the villains of the story. Cash, Kavenagh and Jones, like Robin Hood's band before them, are the heroes.

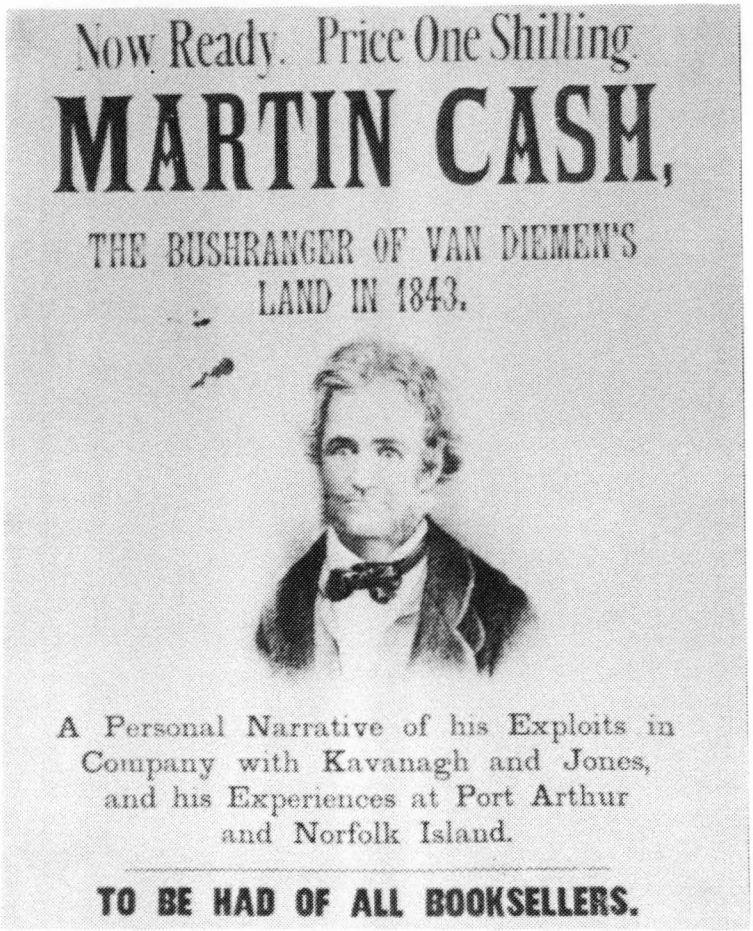

FIGURE 1.4

MARTIN CASH, THE BUSHRANGER

Although Cash was not so simplistic as to portray all convicts as righteous and all free-settlers as vicious (his book contains ample exceptions on both sides), he nevertheless produced a deeply class-conscious work. The convict class is set against the free class, and the reader is unequivocally invited to sympathise with the interests of the former. It is in its accounts of the brutality and unfairness of life in the penal settlements that *Martin Cash* most effectively wins sympathy for the convict class. Cash makes it absolutely clear that what determined whether or not a convict would survive his sentence was not good conduct, but simply good luck.

Martin Cash, the Bushranger rapidly became a best-seller, but curiously received no mention in any of the nineteenth century tourist handbooks. Cash himself was only named for the first time in a 1916 motorists' guide.[55] The bushranger's autobiography, both in its mockery of Tasmania's ruling class and in its partisan attack on the system of law enforcement, was unquestionably subversive. So too was the very fact that Cash challenged law and order and for so long "got away with it". The book's subversive quality possibly helps explain its enduring popularity. It is surmised that the self-same attribute accounts for the low profile accorded it for so long in tourist literature.

The second work which began publication (in serialised form) in 1870 was Marcus Clarke's enormously influential *His Natural Life.* Clarke, a twenty-three year old Melbourne journalist and story writer, was inspired by Victor Hugo's *Les Miserables* to write a great convict novel.[56] His research included a trip to Tasmania in early 1870. There he visited Port Arthur, which still held 574 men under sentence. His research method has been described by Joseph Maule, the Registrar who showed Clarke the prisoners' records:

> "I don't want any of the ordinary prisoners' records, only those of the most notorious criminals", Clarke told me, so for two days I kept handing him volumes.... They opened of themselves at the most used places, and Clarke put a slip of paper between the pages to keep the place. For two days he took notes, and wrote very fast and voluminously.[57]

It was this selective use of research which resulted in a book that has been described as having 'probably done more damage to the reputation of the convict days than any other [work]'.[58] As Trollope observed, 'no tidings that are told ... exaggerate themselves with so much ease as the tidings of horrors',[59] and there can be no doubt that Clarke's emphasis upon the horrors of the System did much to colour popular perceptions. Yet *His Natural Life* is not a subversive work. Nor, in spite of its unremitting portrayal of brutalisation, can it be said to take up a class position on the side of the "bond".

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55 GOVERNMENT TOURIST BUREAU, 1916; *The Tasmanian Motorists' Comprehensive Road Guide*; Leeson Publishing, Hobart, 61. Martin Cash is described as 'the notorious bushranger'.

56 CLARKE, M, 1970; *His Natural Life*; Penguin, Harmondsworth, UK, 10. This centenary edition is virtually an exact transcript of the original serialised novel. Stephen Murray-Smith's introduction provides an account of the novel's genesis and development.

57 LINDSAY, L, 1967; *Comedy of Life: An Autobiography*; Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 246.

58 SMITH, C, 1978; *Shadow Over Tasmania*; Walch & Sons, Hobart, 11.

59 TROLLOPE, *op. cit.*, 494.

The novel tells the tale of Richard Devine, son of a millionaire ship-builder.[60] Accused of a murder which circumstantial evidence suggests he committed, he is forced for complex personal and essentially selfless reasons to adopt the identity of a fictitious sailor, Rufus Dawes. He is found guilty, but, because of the doubts surrounding the case, his death sentence is commuted to one of transportation for life to Van Diemen's Land. When, on the convict transport, a mutiny is planned, it is Dawes who warns the authorities rather than join the 'low-browed, coarse-featured ruffians', with whom he clearly has nothing in common.[61] For his act of treachery, he is framed with being the ring-leader and sentenced to the secondary penal station of Macquarie Harbour.

The novel then leaps six years to 1833 and the final days of that settlement. Dawes, the most severely brutalised man there, attempts suicide just as departure is being organised. The suicide attempt fails and, as a result of a curious sequence of events, Dawes finds himself in the company of the commandant's wife, her daughter, Dora, and one Captain Maurice Frere. All four have been marooned with a limited supply of food. True to class, Dawes gives himself over entirely to the job of saving the small party, and due to his efforts alone all are rescued. Shortly, however, the commandant's wife dies, Dora loses her memory and Frere not only takes credit for the rescue, but accuses Dawes of attempting Dora's life. Once more the false charges hold, and Dawes is incarcerated in Port Arthur.

After another leap in time, we learn that Dawes has become the most notorious convict at Port Arthur, has attempted escape several times, and has been repeatedly flogged. Yet he is still a loner whose one dream is that Dora will remember and rescue him. When he is given another opportunity of escape with a party of fellow convicts, he turns it down – which is probably just as well for four of the party end up as food for the monstrous Gabbett.

We next meet Dawes on Norfolk Island where he has been transferred for no clear reason. Once more, he is considered the worst man in the settlement.[62] The new commandant there is none other than Maurice Frere, a character based closely upon the infamous John Price. Fuelled by guilt caused by his earlier betrayal of Dawes, Frere has the latter punished until he begs for death.

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60 CLARKE, *op. cit.*, 51.

61 *Ibid.*, 127.

62 *Ibid.*, 587.

Finally, driven to absolute despair, Dawes enters into a conspiracy with another prisoner to kill a third, solely because by doing so he will be executed. While awaiting sentence, he is visited by the alcoholic Reverend North who learns his true story. At the conclusion of this, 'a just heaven' permits North the opportunity to let Dawes escape. Dawes does so in the ship which is carrying Dora, now Frere's long-suffering wife, back to Sydney. In a violent hurricane, she and Dawes meet. Her memory is restored, and at that moment the ship goes down taking her with it.[63] In three final books, Dawes, having escaped the wreck and assumed a new name, make his fortune on the gold fields of Ballarat. He warns against siding with the 'lunacy' of the Eureka rebellion and retreats strategically to Melbourne. Finally, his name is cleared and his fortune restored.

Despite its occasional lapses into purple prose, its welter of coincidence and its convolutions of plot, *His Natural Life* remains a powerful work of fiction. At its centre is the ironic fate of a man unjustly punished, not once but three times over, when on each occasion his actions were motivated simply by a desire to do good. The reader involuntarily empathises with Dawes and wishes the wrongs done him to be rectified. Yet the empathy which is elicited is for an individual, not for a class. Although other victims besides Dawes are delineated – the boy convicts at Point Puer, the effeminate Kirkland and the pathetic, blind old Mooney, for example – on the whole the convicts are portrayed as both brutal and beyond redemption. The implication is clear that prior to their transportation they were all natural members of a criminal underclass. Nevertheless, Clarke neither stinted in his depiction of the horrors of the System nor spared its victims his pity.

The serialisation of *His Natural Life* in the monthly *Australian Journal* began in March 1870. In April 1871, after approximately half the book had appeared, S H Wintle took issue with the author *via* the columns of the Hobart *Mercury*.[64] 'It is well known', Wintle wrote, 'that our Victorian neighbours never lose an opportunity of pointing the finger of derision at this colony for its having been made the depot of England's criminals'. Clarke was accused of 'pandering to that widely prevailing and debased taste of sensationalism, which battens on Newgate Calendar literature'. And notwithstanding the fact that the walls of Hobart were covered with posters announcing the advent of the story in an effort to sell it in Tasmania, *His Natural Life* was described as having gone 'so far beyond the bounds of truth or probability, as to render [its] pages offensive to Tasmanians, and even inimical to the interests of the colony'.

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63 CLARKE, *op. cit.*, 685.

64 MERCURY, 19 April 1871; *Mr Marcus Clarke on Tasmania.*

Clarke replied to Wintle ten days later. Nettled at the latter's accusations of him as being 'a writer of deliberate untruths', he confirmed that his book was based upon fact and cited a number of primary sources to back his claim. His book contained no detail, he said, for which he could not provide a parallel case supported by indisputable documentary evidence. Dismissing the suggestion that he was intending to assail Tasmania or Tasmanians as 'a notion that could only occur to the most provincial mind', he revealed that part of his project was:

> to expose ... the infamies and horrors of a gigantic and cruel legislative blunder, and to show to the English public that which has hitherto been buried in blue-books, or faintly whispered in official corners.[65]

Four days later, Wintle had the last word. Unwavering in his condemnation of Clarke's project (an attitude which he claimed was shared by all its Tasmanian readers) his reasoning provides a telling commentary on the sensibilities of the time:

> Mr Clarke tries to warrant the commission of his offence by stating that he possesses "documentary evidence" for his statements. That fact is to be regretted, and it offers nothing in extenuation of his making such a use of it.... He speaks of his "English readers" and in doing so appears to be blind to the fact that that confession greatly aggravates his fault. At the present time, the most absurd notions exist in England respecting the moral tone of society in this colony, and which Mr Clarke's book is well calculated to increase and intensify. He says that he intends to publish the data of his statements in an appendix at the conclusion of his tale. Let me earnestly beg him in the interests of society to abandon that resolution, and to let the "Dead past bury its dead".... The numerous authorities he cites are no authority for the course he has pursued.[66]

Clarke was undeterred by Wintle's arguments and proceeded with the novel, which ran until June 1872, the whole totalling 370,000 words. Although it did not do well, Clarke quickly sold the book rights and set about revising the work. The new, much shorter, version ends with Dawes perishing with Dora (now Sylvia) in the shipwreck.

This version was published in 1874. Despite Wintle's earnest begging, the volume did conclude with a detailed appendix calculated to allow the sceptical to check the novel's factual basis. And, perhaps in deference to Wintle's reservations, Clarke also prefaced the novel with the following statement of purpose:

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65 MERCURY, 29 April, 1871; *Mr M Clarke on Tasmania.*

66 MERCURY, 2 May 1871; *Mr Marcus Clarke on Tasmania.*

> [T]o illustrate in the manner best calculated ... to attract general attention, the inexpediency of again allowing offenders against the law to be herded together in places remote from the wholesome influence of public opinion, and to be submitted to a discipline which must necessarily depend for its administration upon the personal character and temper of their gaolers.[67]

Although some critics were unmoved by this,[68] the majority of contemporary reviewers in both Australia and England accepted both preface and appendix as justification for what many of them would otherwise have regarded as an indefensibly lurid catalogue of horrors. *The Australasian* went still further in its defence of Clarke's project, arguing that:

> Even the historian ... fails to give us anything like so good an idea of the historic personages, the events, the politics and social life, the manners, customs, pastimes and enjoyments of the past as the romance writer.[69]

The book was certainly a great success. It has rarely been out of print, and was found by a poll conducted in 1914 to be the most popular Australian novel.[70] References to it in Tasmanian tourist and travel literature abound. An indication of its importance in shaping tourists' attitudes towards the convict past may be gained from the following testimonial provided by William Senior, who visited Port Arthur in 1876:

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67 CLARKE, M, undated; *For the Term of His Natural Life*; Drinkwater, Hobart, iii-iv. Brian Elliott, in his biography of Clarke (ELLIOTT, B, 1958; *Marcus Clarke*; Oxford University Press, Melbourne) expressed the opinion that such sentiments represented a 'pious rationalisation'.

68 See, for example, The London EXAMINER, 11 December 1875: 'But after all why kick a dead dog?'; JOHN BULL, 16 October 1875: 'Barefaced iniquities have passes away.... For what purpose are our feelings harrowed?'; and MARTIN, A P, 1898; *The Beginnings of Australian Literature*; Sotheran, London: '[*His Natural Life*] draws attention to aspects of our history that should be left forgotten.' Quoted in WILDING, *op. cit.*, xx.

69 Quoted in HERGENHAN, L T, 1971; The Contemporary Reception of *His Natural Life*, *Southerly* 31 (1), 50-63. Perhaps this assessment of the role of the historical novelist, shared incidentally by the twentieth century Marxist critic, George Lukacs (LUCAKS, G, 1969; *The Historical Novel*; Penguin, London), explains why it was that *His Natural Life* was accepted by so many nineteenth century readers as *the* definitive realistic depiction of life in the penal colonies of Van Diemen's Land. Robert Hughes, however, provides a different explanation, holding that it was because of 'the lack of serious historical writing about transportation for more than seventy years after Clarke's novel was published [that] its stories became "true"' (HUGHES, *op. cit.*, 601).

70 CLARKE, 1970, *op. cit.*, 7.

> The execrable doings described with such painfully vivid power by Marcus Clarke in *His Natural Life* are founded upon facts which any man may verify for himself.[71]

That Clarke omitted other facts – those for example which contradicted the impression that all convict overseers and officers were fiends, and those which acknowledged that social success was indeed achieved by a significant number of ex-convicts – was no doubt overlooked by many early readers. Clarke portrayed the System as a hermetically sealed horror-world which offered no possibility of escape for either convict or guard. Brutalisation reduced both to the level of brutes. Opportunity for regeneration was provided in the serialised version of the novel by the discovery of gold in the "free colony" of Victoria; in the published version no such opportunity was suggested. Redemption was only possible through death.

The effect of *His Natural Life* upon the attitudes of both visitors and Tasmanians towards the convict past has been profound. The grim world that Clarke invented was so different from the world of the 1870s that for many it must have been hard to imagine links between the two. While some Tasmanians did not wish such links to be acknowledged, did not for that matter wish the past to be dug up at all, there were thousands of others both inside and outside Tasmania to whom this newly revealed netherworld was fascinating. Clarke's novel may be credited with being one of the two key stimuli for this popular interest in convictism. The other was the tightly guarded penal station of Port Arthur, still in 1874 holding 274 prisoners, but three years later to be shut down, its secrets thrown open to a public which *His Natural Life* had done much to intrigue.

1.4 PORT ARTHUR, *'TERRA INCOGNITA'*

The penal settlement of Port Arthur was created in 1830 by Governor Arthur as a replacement for the two secondary penal stations, Macquarie Harbour and Maria Island, which still operated when he commenced his term of office in 1824. The reason for Arthur's decision was essentially financial: both existing stations were remote and administratively difficult to run. Port Arthur was comparatively close to Hobart by sea, and possessed an excellent harbour and a plentiful supply of timber. Most importantly it was situated on Tasman Peninsula which Arthur believed to be a 'natural penitentiary', being separated

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71 SENIOR, S, 1880; *Travel and Trout in the Antipodes;* George Robinson, Melbourne, 71.

from the mainland of Tasmania by a narrow isthmus, Eaglehawk Neck, which could easily be guarded.

The convict population of Tasman Peninsula increased rapidly from 1830, reaching 475 in 1833, nearly 950 in 1835 and approximately 1,200 in 1844. In all, about 12,700 sentences were served at Port Arthur before its closure in 1877, though some men served more than a single sentence. The average length of sentence was one year. By way of contrast, the total number of male convicts transported to Van Diemen's Land was 60,000.[72]

As a "secondary penal station", Tasman Peninsula functioned essentially as a gaol for those who offended in Van Diemen's Land. Imprisonment there represented the sixth level of Governor Arthur's punishment system, the seventh and most severe level being labour at Port Arthur in chains. Although on the whole convicts there suffered fewer privations than at Macquarie Harbour or Norfolk Island, it is Port Arthur which, as Robert Hughes has pointed out, 'has always dominated the popular historical imagination in Australia as *the* emblem of the miseries of transportation, "the Hell on earth"'.[73]

Port Arthur acquired this reputation soon after it was founded. In the early 1830s the "anti-Arthur faction" included the bulk of the colony's free settlers, who resented Governor Arthur's authoritarian approach compared with that of the governors he followed. These settlers were vociferously supported by the newspaper owners, Melville, Murray and Robertson, who took every opportunity to discredit Arthur and portray him as a tyrant. It has been suggested that it was because Port Arthur bore the governor's name that it was singled out for particular attack.[74] Murray has been described as being 'almost ungovernable in his denunciation of [its] chain gangs, lashings, and tortures', and to have given vent to 'outpourings of venom and wrath ... [that] prepared the way for Marcus Clarke and succeeding novelists'.[75]

In the post-Arthur period, descriptions of the settlement moderated. Van Diemen's Land had by then acquired an evil reputation in England by reason of the treatment of its indigenous people as much as by the horrors of its penal system. Prudence now dictated that the affairs of the colony should be

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72 DENHOLM, D, 1970; Port Arthur: The Men and the Myth, *Historical Studies* **14** (5), 406-423.

73 HUGHES, *op. cit.*, 400.

74 DENHOLM, *op. cit.*

75 MORRIS MILLER, E, 1952; *Pressmen and Governors*; Sydney, 16-17.

presented in a better light. Besides, the wealthy and influential settlers had a new focus for their complaints. In 1842, the Assignment System of convict administration was replaced by the Probation System. This deprived settlers of their convict labourers and servants, who were now distributed around the colony in government gangs. While both public and private attacks against the new governor, Franklin, were every bit as vicious as those which had been aimed at his predecessor, Port Arthur was no longer an effective weapon in the campaign.

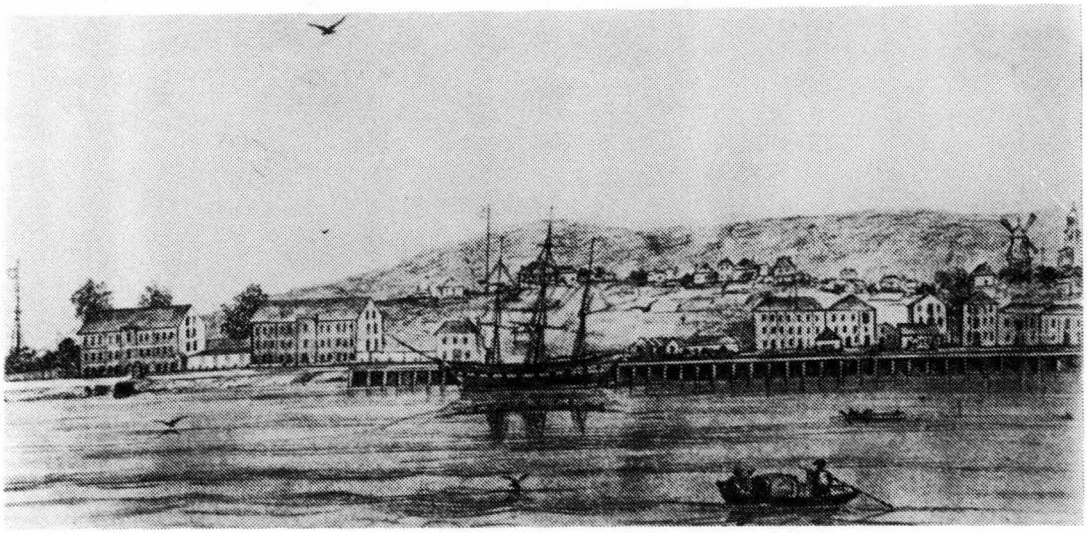

FIGURE 1.5

PORT ARTHUR IN THE 1860s

The best known visitor's account of Port Arthur dating from this period is that provided by the Scottish settler, David Burn, who was taken on a conducted tour of the settlement in 1842. Originally published in *The Tasmanian Journal of Natural Science*, for, it may be assumed, an educated readership, it was later reprinted many times in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries for the tourist market.

Burn wholeheartedly approved of what he was shown. The system as he observed it was thoroughly efficient, the establishment scrupulously clean. For the commandant, Charles O'Hara Booth, who governed Port Arthur from 1833 until 1844 and more than any other man put his stamp upon the place, he had nothing but praise. For the convicts, however, he had an open contempt. On seeing them in the mass, he wrote:

> Crime and its consequences were fearfully depicted in their visages; and we turned from the disagreeable caricature of humanity with as much disgust as pity and regret.[76]

Even the Chartist prisoners, Frost, Jones and Williams, he regarded as being no less criminal than the professional thieves who surrounded them.

The view of Port Arthur presented by Burn differed widely from that given by Martin Cash who commenced his sentence there in the year of Burn's visit. Cash was fortunate in being a powerful man, well able to take care of himself physically. Yet, in the Port Arthur he described, life for a weaker man was one of undiluted misery. However sincere Governor Arthur and O'Hara Booth might have been in their intention to run Port Arthur on principles of absolute fairness, in reality the discipline and day-to-day supervision of the convicts depended entirely upon the whims of the sub-overseers who commanded the work gangs. These men were themselves selected from the gang, and 'the greater the ruffian the longer he retained his billet'.[77] Upon their assertion alone, a prisoner could be flogged. Furthermore, these men could practice upon those under them whatever degree of physical abuse they chose. And, according to Cash, they were not merely brutal and bullying, they were also corrupt. A new prisoner was expected to give up his braces to any sub-overseer who admired them. If he refused he would incur the sub-overseer's displeasure, and that, Cash claimed, 'was a safe passport to the triangles'.

The next visitor's account to be published after Burn's was that of H B Stoney. When he wrote about his 1856 visit to Port Arthur, the establishment had changed considerably, and so had the agenda. The lash was no longer used, the once desperately overcrowded Point Puer boys' prison had been abandoned and was in ruins, and overall convict numbers had dropped since their peak of around 1,200 to 700. It was now timely for the newly independent colony of Tasmania to take steps to dispel the unsavoury reputation which the name "Port Arthur" had done so much to gain for the island.

A wealthy and long-established colonist, Stoney was well suited for the job. He had a vested interest in promoting the respectability of his homeland, and the preface of his book indicates that such indeed was the purpose of his project:

> Little is known of Tasmania beyond its repute as a convict settlement; but five years have now elapsed since it ceased to be one; and as the traces of its former state are fast

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76 BURN, D, 1842; A Visit to Port Arthur, *Tasmanian Journal of Natural Science* 1, 265.

77 CASH, *op. cit.*, 49.

> disappearing, it is to be hoped that the recollection of it will also vanish.[78]

Every courtesy was shown to Stoney on the Peninsula, as indeed it was to all well-to-do visitors at this time. He tells us that the voyage was always freely granted to the stranger, and that sometimes you could 'borrow a horse, as the magistrates, superintendents, and other gentlemen over the stations, are exceedingly obliging, and always anxious to show every attention to the tourist'.[79]

Stoney also availed himself of a ride on the celebrated railway operated by convict power. 'As you rise up the incline', he wrote, 'the prisoners puff and blow, pushing against the carriage, but when descending, up they jump alongside of you, and away you go, dashing, crashing, tearing on. Half-way there is a rest station where you get a relief.'[80] It is revealing that Stoney seemed utterly unaware that the prisoners might also have been in need of relief.

Having arrived at Port Arthur, Stoney was struck, as many have been since, by the physical qualities of the place. In particular, it was its cultivated English beauty rather than its natural beauty which impressed him:

> The appearance of Port Arthur is exceedingly pretty.... Before you stretches a short road with beautiful over-hanging English lime trees; and as you proceed, you fancy you are about to enter the suburban retreat of some London banker. A lovely shrubbery bursts on your view, a pretty iron gate invites you to enter; and before you, peeping through a long vista of English and native trees, appears the neatest church in the Colony. To the left, two or three pretty cottages appear with trellised fronts; and as you proceed and turn through a sweet embowering arch of the multiflora rose in full bloom, a beautiful cottage *ornee* opens to your view.... It is easy to forget, wandering through this beautiful garden, that seven hundred fellow-creatures, who have lost home and liberty through crime, are in chains so near you.[81]

But forget them Stoney could not. 'Although a visit to the Prisoners' Barracks is not one of much interest', he wrote (somewhat dishonestly, one feels), 'the stranger could not well leave Port Arthur without such a visit; for, as the principal feature of the place is gang after gang of chained convicts, he would naturally like to see where and how they are located'.[82]

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78 STONEY, *op. cit.*, preface.

79 *Ibid.*, 40.

80 *Ibid.*, 45.

81 *Ibid*, 49.

82 *Ibid.*, 50.

Not surprisingly, Stoney found the regime admirably enforced, 'perfect order, comfort and cleanliness' prevailing. Yet he conceded that '[t]o the philanthropist the sight of so many criminals congregated around [was] most melancholy', for he could not help considering that 'all – though the very dregs of society, the offscouring of the earth – were born in a land where truth prevails'.[83]

FIGURE 1.6

EAGLEHAWK NECK

Stoney included in his tour, as so many later visitors were to do, the attractions of Eaglehawk Neck. He inspected the nearby natural marvels, the Tessellated Pavement, the Blow Hole and Tasman Arch; and he also observed the row of fourteen dogs, each 'of a different breed, but all ferocious looking brutes', chained across the Neck to prevent the escape of prisoners. Neglecting to acknowledge the success of Cash, Kavenagh and Jones in negotiating this obstacle (stories of which may well have been suppressed), he claimed that although many escapes had been attempted at this point, none had succeeded. To substantiate this, he related an apocryphal tale – later to gain wide currency – of four absconders, three English, one a Negro, who attempted to swim across:

> the white swimmers were seized by a no less formidable guardian of the waters than the rapacious shark. The darkey got clean to land, but was taken by the outlying picket.[84]

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83 STONEY, *op. cit.*, 51.

84 *Ibid.*, 54.

Stoney's popular book, reprinted several times, was the first general work to include an account of Port Arthur; it was also the last book to include a description of the settlement for some years. Popular interest in the establishment appeared to wane during its decline, although it remained for many a source of potential danger. As a parliamentary committee concluded in 1861, its continued presence 'afforded to the Colony but a sad and distant prospect of escaping from the frightful evils resulting from this continuous circulation of [its] criminals through the community'.[85] Indeed, much of the colony's violent crime during this period was committed by ex-Port Arthur men.[86] And even as late as 1869, when it was proposed by Britain that the last detachment of Imperial Troops be withdrawn, cabinet, the Governor and the Commandant of Port Arthur were agreed that the troops were 'an essential element for securing, in case of an outbreak, the complete isolation of the settlement on Tasman's Peninsula from the mainland'.[87]

But in the same year, consideration was being given by parliament to the settlement's post-penal future. In October, forty MPs sailed to Port Arthur to observe its condition, and speculate upon the future uses to which its buildings might be put. They wandered round the station and 'as the completeness of the whole settlement came to be more and more comprehended [by them], the question naturally arose – what is to be done with Port Arthur?'[88] It was a question to be asked many times over the ensuing decade. A suggestion arising from the MPs was that it should become 'one great benevolent and invalid institution of Tasmania', but no steps were taken to realise this dream.

Then, as speculation on the future of the establishment began in earnest with the advent of the new decade, half a dozen eye-witness accounts of its condition appeared in as many years. Although each of the writers, it may be assumed, was stimulated to visit Port Arthur primarily for reasons of curiosity, beyond that their motives differed widely. In 1870, a *Mercury* correspondent gave an account of a visit. Although he had little to say regarding the administration of the settlement, some of his observations and speculations foreshadowed many of a similar nature in the years ahead. As his vessel approached the harbour, his eye was caught by:

> a very beautiful little island standing a short distance from the main shore, and named very appropriately "Dead Island"; here

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85 HAJ 1860/98, 6.

86 REYNOLDS, *op. cit.*

87 HAJ 1870/27, 3.

88 MERCURY, 7 October 1869.

> all who die on the settlement, free and bond, are consigned to one common resting place; here, whatever differences may have existed in life all are buried ... the oppressor, (if such he was), and the oppressed alike.
>
> ... ...
>
> Immediately after ... the penal settlement ... appears in view, and a very pretty panorama it presents; gradually unfolding all its beauties to the eyes of those who, for the first time, gaze on this charming spot. The first and very natural thought that arises is, what a pity that such a delightful place should be put to such a sad use.
>
> ... ...
>
> ... the question may be asked, what will be done with the settlement?... It certainly does seem a pity to abandon such a place.[89]

The contrast between the natural beauty of the setting and the purpose made of it has been a theme occurring regularly in the literature inspired by Port Arthur. There have also been numerous ruminations occasioned by visits to "Dead Island", which, as tourism developed, became known as "The Isle of the Dead" and even "L'Isle des Morts".

Marcus Clarke, the other journalist to visit Port Arthur during 1870, was not moved by the sight of the cemetery, however. To him, "Dead Island" was 'a foolish little sand island hummocked with graves'.[90] Neither was Clarke inspired to pay tribute to the settlement's natural beauty. There is no description in his work of the glories of the place. Too painfully aware of its history, and arriving amid weather that suited his mood, he found 'no beauty in [the] desolate cliffs, no charming picturesqueness in [the] frowning shore'.[91] Instead:

> there seemed to ... hang over the whole place a sort of horrible gloom, as though the sunlight had been withdrawn from it, and ... I should have been ashamed to have suddenly met some high-minded friend, inasmuch as it seemed that in coming down to stare at these chained and degraded beings, we had all been guilty of an act of unmanly curiosity. Then turning from the almost empty workshops to the huge barracks, and hearing the stipendiary's glib stories of escapes, and murders and suicides to avoid the agony of living, I pictured the many windows of that hideously square and practical structure crowded with heads; saw the open ground before us once more dotted over with chain gangs, heard the cat hiss and swing, and caught the echoes of the awful mirth with which the doomed wretches cheered their lingering hours.[92]

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89 MERCURY, 25 March 1870.

90 WILDING, *op. cit.*, 526.

91 *Ibid.*, 519.

92 *Ibid*, 521-522.

FIGURE 1.7

DEAD ISLAND

Unlike the impassive Stoney, Clarke was acutely aware how thin was 'the planking of "favourable circumstances" between the best of us and [the convict's] fate'. Also unlike Stoney, he could find no justification for the system: it had been a 'frightful blunder'. Moreover, this view was now widely held, for 'everybody admitted that "mistakes had been made in the old times"'. However, having made the admission, they:

> begged that the loathly corpse of this dead wickedness called Transportation might be comfortably buried away and ignored of men and journalists.[93]

But the journalist Clarke, about to embark upon his "Great Australian Novel", was not to be so easily discouraged. For him, the 'smell' of transportation remained; it disgusted him and the truth about the system was not to be suppressed:

> Cripples, self-maimed, lest worse might have befallen them, walk the streets of Hobart Town. In out-of-the-way corners, in shepherds' huts or roadside taverns, one meets "old hands" who relate terrible and true histories. In the folio reports of the House of Commons can be read statements which make one sick with disgust, and flush hot with indignation. Officialdom, with its crew of parasites and lickspittles, may try to palliate the enormities committed in the years gone by; may revile, with such powers of abuse as are given to it the writers who record the facts that it blushes for; but the sad grim truth remains. For half a century the law allowed the vagabonds and criminals of

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93 WILDING, *op. cit.*, 529.

> England to be subjected to a lingering torment, to a hideous debasement, to a monstrous system of punishment futile for good and horribly powerful for evil; and it is with feelings of the most profound delight that we record the abolition of the last memorial of an error fraught with so much misery.[94]

But the penal settlement of Port Arthur lingered on. By 1872, when it was visited by Anthony Trollope, the voyage to the Peninsula was no longer free, but 'more than sufficiently expensive'.[95] Like Stoney and Clarke, Trollope visited the noted scenic attractions at Eaglehawk Neck. Like them too, he commented on the row of dogs set up at the Neck to deter the escape of prisoners. He had heard of the dogs before his visit to Tasmania, but had thought that they were mythic.

By the time of Trollope's visit, it was widely known that the days of the establishment were numbered. In the three years since Clarke's visit the total number of inmates had dropped from 574 to 506, but of these the number of paupers had only dropped by 20 to 146, and the number of 'lunatics' had tellingly *risen* by 3 to 89. Trollope was 'troubled ... as to the future destiny of so remarkable a place',[96] and predicted that without English money to provide for the upkeep of the buildings, they would stand till they fell into dust, and that 'men [would] make unfrequent excursions to visit the strange ruins'.[97]

Indeed, the process of decay had already begun. When William Senior paid the establishment a visit in 1876 only sixty convicts remained, and:

> the genius of decay ... [had] laid its insidious grip upon turret and foundation stone alike. The stronghold, maintained by guard-house and soldiery, will crumble to pieces. It is crumbling to pieces. You shall see nothing which embodies the spirit of desolation so much as Port Arthur.... Dilapidation now reigns over all; weeds and black snakes over-run the place.[98]

In addition to indulging in the usual tributes to the settlement's beauty and speculating on the 'release' provided by "Dead Island", Senior made the following telling remark:

> I cannot enter into many questions discussed during my visit; but if one-half of what was said in my hearing be true, Port Arthur will not crumble to hopeless decay a moment too soon.[99]

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94 WILDING, *op. cit.*, 529-530.

95 TROLLOPE, *op. cit.*, 507.

96 *Ibid.*, 507.

97 *Ibid.*, 518.

98 SENIOR, *op. cit.*, 71-73.

99 *Ibid.*, 74.

It would seem that the "horror tradition" of Port Arthur, shortly to be broadcast orally in the stories of the establishment's first tourist guides, had begun even before the settlement closed.

It is also true to say that, well before it closed, the value of the establishment as a potential resource was clearly apparent to Australia's embryonic tourist industry. Although visits could only be arranged with difficulty and at considerable expense, the mere presence of Port Arthur on the island was opportunistically recognised as a source of interest to the prurient. Walch's tourist guide of 1871 made no mention of the existence of Port Arthur. Thomas' *Guide* of 1869, on the other hand, showed no such scruples. Written solely with the purpose of titillating intending tourists, this guide book's account of Port Arthur was starkly sensational. Nowhere was to be found the sympathy for the convict's lot to be found in the writing of Trollope, Clarke and Senior. To the author of the article on Port Arthur:

> It [was] no joke to keep lock and key on four or five hundred of the most incarnate villains on earth; for your Port Arthur criminal is not an everyday criminal – he simply represents incarnate wickedness.[100]

Kept waiting at Eaglehawk Neck for official permission to enter, the author listened to stories of escape attempts – all unsuccessful – told by the guards. Finally reaching Port Arthur by nightfall, he watched 'the apparently placid slumbers of probably the greatest congregation of incarnate ruffians that ... the world can produce'. 'How could they sleep?', he wondered:

> Not one of them, but under any but an English Government would have been hanged a dozen times over, rank with villainies and unutterable wickedness, yet they were all soundly sleeping.

The following day, he watched the convicts eat:

> A very good breakfast, indeed; capital bread, capital fluid, and rather too much of both.

He watched them work:

> Work is it? It does not look much like work. It is not, at any rate, such hard work as writing an article.

For those with whom work did not agree, he recommended solitary confinement:

> Solitary confinement means to lie upon your back, if so disposed, all day, eat capital meals, read books, if inclined to

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100 THOMAS, 1869, *op. cit.*, 154.

> read, and whistle to yourself.... Upon the whole, to a man of philosophic mind, weary of the world and its troubles, we should strongly recommend ... to be in solitary confinement.[101]

Then, at 9.15am, having completed his night of research, the author steamed out of Port Arthur, while breakfasting on sausages and chops.

Although the tenor of this article may be assumed to be a product of the writer's personal attitude, it would be safe to conclude that it also represented the type of attitude which both he and his editor judged would strike a chord with its readers, namely the wealthy Victorian tourists of the day. It was retained for the 1870 edition, but omitted in 1873. This was the year when the carefully selected *Epitome of the History of Tasmania* made its appearance, and by then Tasmanian sensibilities had begun to determine the contents of Thomas' guide. For, as the 1870s progressed, the continued presence of Port Arthur as a functioning gaol was a source of increasing embarrassment to middle-class Tasmanians. The strength of local feeling was made clear in a *Mercury* editorial in 1876:

> For years it has been the one desire of the people of Tasmania, the one object of legislation in connection with our penal and charitable institutions, to break up the establishment at Port Arthur; to erase, as it were, its sad history from our memories, and to remove the plague spot that disfigures fair Tasmania.[102]

The delay in breaking up the institution was caused by the lack of prison accommodation elsewhere in Tasmania. Since the old Imperial Prison had been demolished in 1857, prison barracks in Campbell Street, then on the outskirts of the town, had been used as the new gaol. But they were not large enough to accommodate all the Port Arthur transferees; neither were they secure. Indeed, it was suggested that they were only capable of confining those whose convenience it suited to remain there.

But gradually, as its buildings mouldered, the population at Port Arthur declined. Then, in July 1876, came a thunderbolt: a party of one hundred Hobart paupers were to be shipped *to* Port Arthur. The recent bad weather had drastically increased the numbers seeking charitable relief in the city; at the Cascades refuge alone, 76 people were sleeping on the floor, and the authorities could think of no other solution than the one they came up with. Public opinion was outraged, but that did not prevent 70 or 80 'pleasure seekers' from accompanying the paupers on their voyage south. Their number included two MPs, a clergyman, a bishop and 'a fair sprinkling of ladies'. The establishment

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101 THOMAS, 1869, *op. cit.*, 159-160.

102 MERCURY, 21 July 1876.

was inspected, photographs were taken and the general run-down condition of the place remarked upon. In all, the trip was described as having been very pleasant throughout.[103]

In early 1877, it was apparent that Port Arthur would indeed be broken up that year. Capitalising on the upsurge of popular interest which this produced, the *Mercury* ran three long articles on the subject.[104] The correspondent found not only Port Arthur itself rapidly falling into disrepair, but the numerous out-stations on Tasman Peninsula actually *in* a ruinous state. The bush had reclaimed gardens, jetties were unsafe and some buildings had actually collapsed. At Port Arthur itself, a wall built at considerable expense had been demolished and its bricks shipped to Hobart for use in the new gaol. Other walls had fallen out of perpendicular, windows were broken, fences had tumbled down. The journalist estimated that it would cost £5,000 to put the establishment into a state of thorough repair. Above all, he wondered what would be done with it. No one, he was sure, would purchase the buildings, even for a nominal sum. They would only be prevented from rotting away, he thought, if 'some of the "old hands" [made] a descent on the hated spot, and [set] fire to it in revenge for the many hardships they had suffered within its walls'. In fact, he believed the whole Peninsula to be of no value: the soil was so bad that agriculture was next to impossible, there was only one small area of arable land and the timber was almost worthless for the purpose of commerce. Even the widely touted idea of turning the area into a sanatorium was dismissed: the climate was simply too unhealthy.

In April 1877, all the remaining convicts, paupers and lunatics were transferred to Hobart, leaving only a small work gang at the establishment. The sight of the hand-cuffed and leg-ironed old men being unloaded at Franklin wharf attracted a large crowd who were only kept back by a body of police. As the carts containing the convicts rumbled their bizarre way to the Campbell Street gaol they were followed by 'a large number of idlers'.[105] In September, the final gang of seven prisoners was brought to Hobart, and a few weeks later the remaining stores were also delivered. The regular steamer trips were discontinued, the establishment was abandoned and, in a futile effort to deny its past, its name was officially changed to "Carnarvon".[106]

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103 MERCURY, 21 July 1876 and 25 July 1876.

104 MERCURY, 24 February 1877, 26 February 1877 and 27 February 1877.

105 MERCURY, 18 April 1877 and 20 April 1877.

106 TASMANIAN MAIL, 22 September 1877.

On 28 December, the government attempted to auction off crown lands throughout the Tasman Peninsula. An incentive to purchase was provided by the *Tasmanian Mail* which, contradicting the widely held view that Peninsula land was valueless, advised of the presence of 'an auriferous reef' that was rumoured to have been discovered by prisoners some year before.[107] Opportunity was also provided to inspect the available land: at a cost of 15s per head, intending purchasers and sight-seers were sought for a two-day steamer trip to Port Arthur on 17 December.[108] A party of about thirty excursionists took advantage of the voyage. Charts indicating the lay-out of the settlement were available, and on the second day the official caretaker, Mr Evenden, spent over two hours showing the bulk of the party over the abandoned prison buildings, the Church and Dead Island.[109]

Two day trips to the Peninsula quickly followed. On 20 December, a party of twenty five visited Eaglehawk Neck,[110] and on Boxing Day the Manchester Unity International Order of Oddfellows arranged an excursion to Port Arthur in aid of their Widows' and Orphans' Fund.[111] It was estimated that a massive party of nine hundred pleasure seekers crowded the ship, many more being left at the wharf.

That Port Arthur proved immediately so attractive to sight-seers should come as no great surprise. "Riegel", who was a boy in Hobart before the gaol was abandoned, wrote in 1893 explaining the attraction:

> A wonderful and mysterious place was Port Arthur in the eyes of all who had not had the "good fortune" to visit that portion of Her Majesty's domains, either by compulsion or otherwise. To them it was a kind of *terra incognita*, although so near at hand, and it was only by means of an occasional newspaper paragraph the general public gathered a few stray gleams of information [about it].... No wonder [the lad's] little heart swelled with an intense desire to pry into the mysteries of this most secret portion of his island home.[112]

So the large crowd had its curiosity satisfied. Again the buildings and gardens were inspected. But a vandal element was present. Fruit trees, shrubs and two of

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107 TASMANIAN MAIL, 22 September 1877, p13; *Wiped from the Map.*

108 MERCURY, 10 December 1877, 11 December 1877 and 12 December 1877.

109 MERCURY, 20 December 1877.

110 MERCURY, 20 December 1877 and 21 December 1877.

111 MERCURY, 15 December 1877.

112 CLIPPER, 22 April 1893; *Convict Port Arthur* by "Riegel".

the settlement's famous oaks were wantonly destroyed. Whether this was an act of vengeance by "old hands" or simply a mindless act was not revealed.[113]

Two days after the Manchester Unity trip, the land auction took place. But despite the publicity, the excursions and the promise of gold, the hammer fell on a mere fourteen lots. Of these, only one block of ten acres lay in the penal settlement itself.[114] Almost all the Peninsula's land stayed as crown property, as did the prison buildings upon it. The question over what to do with them remained.

But while successive governments agonised over what to do with the buildings, one thing was plain: there was great interest in visiting them from people both inside and outside the colony. For entrepreneurs, charitable organisations and steamship companies, this interest had the power to generate income; consequently it demanded to be both cultivated and exploited. For this reason, the abandoned Port Arthur became, entirely against the wishes of the Tasmanian establishment, the seed from which the island's historical tourism industry grew.

1.5 SUMMARY

Prior to 1877, no historical sites in Tasmania had been commodified for tourism. Consequently, it is difficult to assess the extent to which market forces determined attitudes towards the past during this period. Certainly, the attitudes expressed by Meredith and by the anonymous writer of Thomas' *Epitome of History* accorded entirely with their authors' views of what was in the best interests of Tasmania economically, that is: that it was necessary to boost the view that the colony had broken with the past, that its population was not tainted with convictism and that prosperity lay around the corner. In no way did this economic determinant conflict with the authors' ideological interpretation of the past.

Applying Plumb's typology, Meredith sought to 'sanction the *status quo*' by her interpretation of history as little more than a parade of governors, and by her interpretation of the built heritage as a catalogue of little more than the mansions owned by the colony's wealthiest men. Social change was only acknowledged in Tasmania's having 'shak[en] off the detested burden of ... transportation'; that

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113 MERCURY, 28 December 1877.

114 TASMANIAN MAIL, 5 January 1878, p26.

having occurred, it was implied that the island's 'destiny' was to flourish as a loyal and stable outpost of empire.

For the tourists, the benefits of the past as perceived by the tourist guides fit neatly into Lowenthal's categories. As British subjects half a world away from "home", the wealthy citizens of the Australian colonies who were able to afford the passage to Tasmania needed the 'familiar' to remind them of their roots. The Georgian architecture, in contrast to the shanty-like structures of Melbourne, provided this. By means of it, tourists 'recognised' the built landscape, even the gardens, of home. The very solidity of the buildings and their age 'reaffirmed and validated' the colonising purpose of Empire. They also helped confirm the visitors' sense of 'identity' as Britons, and 'guided' them in their patriotic duty to put down deep roots.

By contrast, the view of the past offered by Cash and Clarke challenged the Tasmanian establishment's comfortable denial of the convict era, the latter doing so more passionately in his journalism than in his novel. The past they held up for view did not sanction the *status quo*. Cash portrayed the colony's landed gentry as cowards and buffoons; Clarke described its law enforcers as unprincipled sadists, and their victims as still walking Hobart's streets.

A further contrast is afforded by the article on Port Arthur which appeared in Thomas' 1869 guide book. Although this sensationalist piece of work aired what the Tasmanian establishment would have preferred to have kept hidden, its bias fully sanctioned the *status quo*. Its intention could be construed as the direct opposite of Clarke's. Yet both had one important factor in common, of which both authors were utterly aware: both traded on the undeniable fascination which the convict era held for much of the public. The benefits it provided were 'escape' and 'enrichment'. How its lessons might be taken as a 'guide', how it might 'teach about social change' were questions that would be asked repeatedly in the years to come. Increasingly, they cannot be answered without taking account of convictism and its relics as commodities. Following the closure of Port Arthur in 1877, this process of "commodification" began.

CHAPTER 2: THE BOOM YEARS, 1878 TO 1892

2.1 OPTIMISM, LIBERALISM AND TOURISM

2.1.1 Politics and society

As Tasmania entered the 1880s, its economy commenced a period of short but spectacular boom, based almost entirely upon the island's new mineral industry. Important discoveries of tin and gold during the previous decade had led to the formation of profitable companies, the most successful of which were the tin mine at Mount Bischoff in the northwest and the gold mine at Beaconsfield, near Launceston. The latter rapidly grew to be the colony's third largest town.

With the revival of confidence in Tasmania's economy, the decline in its population was reversed, and at the start of the decade arrivals exceeded departures for the first time in fifteen years.[1] New settlement also increased rapidly, particularly along the fertile land of the northwest coast.

As prospects for the future brightened, so the regretful harking back to the security of convict days diminished and, in some circles, the desire to demonstrate a complete rift with the past became more pronounced. Thus there occurred further renaming of places closely associated with the convict past. So Sarah Island in Macquarie Harbour became Settlement Island, and in 1887 the outstations of the Tasman Peninsula followed Port Arthur in having their names changed: the Cascades became Koonya; Wedge Bay, Nubeena and Norfolk Bay, Taranna.[2]

The new found mood of optimism also led to political change. With the influx of population and the growth of new money, there developed a faith in progress which permeated both the sciences and the humanities. The deep conservatism which had held sway in Tasmania at least since 1856 was challenged socially and intellectually by a group of men whose nucleus met at Hobart's Minerva Club. Influenced by the philosophy of John Stuart Mill, they shared a belief in progressive liberalism, in commercial enterprise and in the reformatory values of education and self-improvement.[3] Politically, this group built up its numbers in the House of Assembly until, in the election of 1887, the "liberals", as they were popularly known,

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1 ROBSON, 1991, *op. cit.*, 93.

2 TASMANIAN MAIL, 24 September 1887.

3 ROE, M, 1979; Beattie, John Watt, NAIRN, B and SERLE, G (Eds), *Australian Dictionary of Biography Volume 7*; Melbourne University Press, 232-233.

won sufficient seats to form a ministry under the leadership of P O Fysh, thereby bringing to an end thirty years of entrenched conservative rule.

The upper house, however, was still dominated by the old landed families, many of whom had received their land grants during the 1830s. The franchise virtually guaranteed them their seats, and they were resolutely opposed to any bills designed to increase social equity. Many of the liberals' initiatives, therefore, failed to lead to the desired social change. Nevertheless, the new thinking did influence the ways in which the islanders related to their past, and this had implications for the way in which that past was interpreted for tourists.

2.1.2 Tourism – a growth industry

Although no accurate statistics are available for tourism to Tasmania in the 1880s, figures are available for arrivals and departures to and from the colony. From these may be deduced its growing popularity as a tourism venue. In 1880, there were 10,578 arrivals and 9,932 departures. Arrivals then increased steadily until 1887 and then rose sharply to a peak of 29,500 in 1890. Then there was a drop over the next three years to a low of 18,000 in 1893. In the late eighties, the boom in arrivals might well have been partly attributable to the ingress of miners to the west coast. Nevertheless, the government statistician remarked upon 'the very large number of excursion travellers' who were observed to arrive during 1889 to 1890, and there was also a proportionately higher increase in female arrivals over this period.[4]

The tourist season centred on the summer months and lasted at least until Easter.[5] Tourists had the choice of steaming to Launceston, Hobart or to a number of ports along the northwest coast. In 1886, the Tasmanian Steam Navigation Company ran steamers twice weekly from Melbourne to Launceston, once every ten days from

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4 This information, based upon STATISTICS OF TASMANIA has been extrapolated from MOSLEY, J G, 1963; *Aspects of the Geography of Recreation in Tasmania*; unpublished PhD thesis, ANU, 11. Mosley also provides a useful graph (Fig. 1, Vol. 3) showing the fluctuations in arrivals to Tasmania between 1863 and 1959.

5 In 1879 a sharp-eyed reporter noted that intercolonial visitors had been spotted at Sorell as early as September (TASMANIAN MAIL, 27 September 1879), and in 1890 it was not until 17 May that the people of Carnarvon concluded that the visitors had all left, and that they would probably have no more until the summer (TASMANIAN MAIL, 17 May 1890). These dates probably mark the outer limits of the season during the decade.

Melbourne to Hobart, and fortnightly from Sydney to both Launceston and Hobart.[6] The following year, this company was taken over by the Union Steamship Company, but its service remained unaltered. A second large Australasian company, Huddart, Parker & Co., then began plying the routes, and competition between the two companies led to a discounting of fares which may have contributed to the sharp increase in tourist numbers after 1887.[7]

Several of the tourist guide books of the period take the form of model tours to Tasmania. These generally begin and end with voyages to and from Launceston, trips to Hobart and other centres being made from there. It was also possible to steam into either Hobart or Launceston, travel by coach to the other town and then leave again by sea.[8] Rail travel between the two centres was possible after 1876, but at first traffic was slow to build.[9] In spite of this, there was a gradual move away from coach traffic along the Main Road, and by 1880 it was already being assumed by the mainland press that the taverns and coaching houses along it had been 'relegated [by the railway era] ... to the land of dreams'.[10] The effect of this bypassing on several midland towns was to halt their growth; thus villages such as Ross and Oatlands were able to retain an "old world appeal" upon which they could capitalise much later, when the age of the motor car once more put them within easy reach of tourists.

Access to the remote parts of Tasmania was difficult throughout the decade. Poor roads prevented all but intrepid tourists from visiting the northeast coast, although as settlement along the northwest coast proceeded, the small towns of Penguin, Ulverstone and Devonport became popular holiday destinations for Tasmanians as well as for visitors.[11]

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6 TASMANIAN STEAM NAVIGATION COMPANY, 1886; *Guide for Visitors to Tasmania or How to Spend My Holiday 1886-7*; Mercury, Hobart, 1.

7 MOSLEY, *op. cit.*, 11.

8 This was regarded by MOSLEY (*op. cit.*, 15) as a 'typical round tour'.

9 ROBSON, 1991, *op. cit.*, 59-60. It is conceivable that this was partly on account of the poor quality of the line's construction, the initials TMLR (Tasmanian Main Line Railway) being presumed to stand for "Too Many Loose Rails" . Dr J L Miller of Launceston brought the house down with this joke when delivering a paper to the Royal Colonial Institute in Pall Mall (TASMANIAN MAIL, 23 August 1879).

10 Reprinted from the Melbourne LEADER in TASMANIAN MAIL, 20 March 1880.

11 MOSLEY, *op. cit.*, 18. In fact, so rapid was tourist development there that in 1888 H Haywood brought out a tourist guide book devoted to this region alone: HAYWOOD, H, 1888; *Colonists' Advertiser and Visitors' Guide to Tasmania*; Hobart.

The west coast was almost inaccessible in 1880, yet the area intrigued tourists, and tales of excursions there were common newspaper fare long before any but the most adventurous travelled there.[12] A demand was soon created, and it was not long before it was filled. Just before Christmas 1882, a letter was written to the *Mercury* suggesting that since 'scores of people [had] been anxious to visit this interesting part of Tasmania' it would pay 'some speculative individual' to organise a pleasure excursion by steamer. The writer felt that if fifty people each put up 50/- it would be possible to arrange a Christmas trip taking in Macquarie, Trial and Granville Harbours.[13] One or two steamers carried tourists during 1882, and the following year a regular service was established.[14]

In 1883, the silver boom town of Zeehan was founded, followed by the Macquarie Harbour port of Strahan. As fresh mineral deposits were discovered on the west coast, the population of the area quickly grew. Nevertheless, the overland journey to the west remained so hazardous throughout the decade that Howard Haywood, after describing a possible route in his tourist guide of 1885, requested any of his readers who accomplished it to get in touch with him.[15]

Until the government railway from Zeehan to Strahan opened in February 1892, the only communication with Strahan was by sea. Nevertheless, the town rapidly became a tourist centre, and began to promote itself as such.[16] Easter trips became

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12 So difficult was the west coast to get to in 1881 that a correspondent of the *Tasmanian Mail* ironically predicted that the following year's tourist guide book might contain the following quote: 'After surveying the grand and majestic scenery of Mt Heemskirk, the tourist will do well to pay attention to Macquarie Harbour, which is situated about twenty miles due south. The overland journey must on no account be attempted, as it is impracticable. The tourist must first proceed to Bischoff, from there back to Emu Bay, whence procuring the first available steamer to Melbourne, he may, by watching his opportunity be lucky enough to get a passage to Macquarie Harbour.' (TASMANIAN MAIL, 11 June 1881, p10.)

13 MERCURY, 14 December 1882.

14 When in 1882 the TSN vessel, *SS Tasman*, advised that it might, on its next trip, carry passengers to the west coast, dropping them off at Macquarie Harbour and calling in again on its way back from Melbourne, much interest was expected (TASMANIAN MAIL, 18 February 1882, p18). The following year, after a visit by the Minister for Lands, the Hobart Steam Navigation Company commenced trips to the west coast every eighteen days (TASMANIAN MAIL , 12 May 1883, p9 and 30 June 1883, p17).

15 HAYWOOD, H, 1885b; *Through Tasmania: Illustrated Guide for Visitors and Colonists 1885-86*; Hobart, 32-33.

16 Articles in the TASMANIAN MAIL, 29 December 1888, 13 July 1889 and 31 May 1890 all praised the town as a tourist resort.

fashionable,[17] and in 1890 a second hotel was built, an extension being added the following year.[18] The return voyage from Hobart at this time cost the considerable sum of £4, so tourism to the area was only affordable by the rich.

It is, however, possible to deduce from the success of several reasonably priced coffee palace hotels built at Hobart and Launceston during the 1880s that less wealthy visitors were beginning to swell the tourist numbers.[19] Yet the tourist guide books of the period were still aimed squarely at the rich.[20] In the main, they directed tourists to scenic and recreational attractions. These were growing in diversity. Steamer cruises continued to be popular, particularly up the Derwent to New Norfolk. And now sea cruises also became frequent, particularly with the opening up of Eaglehawk Neck and the Tasman Peninsula. Caves were discovered and exploited at Chudleigh in the north, thereby forming the basis for a popular three day excursion from Launceston.[21] Deer stalking was available in some areas, as was rough shooting. And the successful acclimatisation of trout resulted in the development of angling facilities throughout the decade. New roads were built to the lakes of the Central Highlands, and in 1890 the Union Steamship Company's guide book contained a chapter on "Lakes and Mountains".

Tourists were also directed to those recent developments which could be said to symbolise the colony's new-found self-confidence. Chief among these were the mines. Beaconsfield gold mine was regarded as one of the principal "outs" from Launceston, and Waratah, the town which served the Mt Bischoff mine (the richest tin mine in the world), was regarded as the 'lion of the northwest coast'.[22] Howard

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17 TASMANIAN MAIL, 18 March 1888, p17 and 12 April 1890, p10.

18 TASMANIAN MAIL, 12 April 1890, p10 and 28 February 1891, p28.

19 This is the conclusion drawn by MOSLEY, *op. cit.*, 18.

20 For example, the following advice was contained in the Tasmanian Steam Navigation Company's guide book of 1886: 'Our Excursionist can hardly go wrong in leaving his card for the Governor and writing his name in the Visitors' Book, and having done this he may consider himself at liberty to present himself at one of the receptions which successive Governors have been in the habit of holding weekly or fortnightly during the summer months' (TASMANIAN STEAM NAVIGATION COMPANY, *op. cit.*, 5), and 'a visitor, furnished with letters of introduction, will seldom fail to be put down as an honorary member on the [Tasmanian] Club list' (*ibid.*, 9).

21 MOSLEY, *op. cit.*, 16.

22 ANON, 1894; *Thomas Cook & Sons Railway Official Guide Book to Tasmania 1894*; Roe Bros, Melbourne, 165. The journey to Waratah took a little more effort to arrange than the trip to Beaconsfield. From Launceston, it was possible to sail by the Tasmanian Steam Navigation Company's *SS Devon* to Circular Head, and then to travel by rail to Waratah (TASMANIAN STEAM NAVIGATION COMPANY, *op. cit.*, 41). Towards the end of the decade, direct steamer trips from Melbourne to

Haywood, who spent eighteen months on a walking tour of Tasmania with a 70lb swag on his back,[23] found his tour of the mine so interesting that he devoted two full and detailed pages of his 1888 guide book to descriptions of its shafts, adits, tailing dams and ore crushers.[24]

Apart from its mines, Tasmania had few examples of industrial progress to show off. Yet these few were promoted in every tourist guide of the decade. The longest established was Hobart's Cascade brewery. Founded in 1824, this imposing stone building situated on the lower slopes of Mt Wellington produced beer and cordials. On obtaining an order for admittance from the company's offices, tourists were shown all over the building and had the intricacies of brewing explained to them. The tour culminated with a sampling of 'the famous ale'.[25] Hobart's other chief example of industry also had aesthetic appeal. This was the shot tower built by Joseph Moir and completed in 1870 at Taroona, just south of Hobart on the road to Brown's River. The 61 metre tapering sandstone tower formed a substantial landmark. Its photograph was one of the few to appear in Button's *Picturesque Tasmania,* the first Tasmanian guide book to make use of photography.[26]

Launceston's sole example of thriving industry was the Waverley Woollen Mill, which went into production in 1874. Visitors were shown all over the mill and were provided with an explanation of its workings. Occasionally such visits resulted in orders for the fine cloth it produced.[27] It is also likely (although no references have come to light) that tourists were impressed with the mill's own hydro-electric

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the northwest were also offered. In addition, it was occasionally possible to travel to Waratah as a member of a party. These were generally arranged to coincide with the Easter break, and as an early example of a "package tour" necessitated the co-operation of a coaching company, the Emu Bay and Main Line Railways, several hoteliers and the mine manager. Such an Easter excursion to Mt Bischoff was held in 1887 (TASMANIAN MAIL, 23 April 1887, p18). For tours of the mine, a fee of 5/- was levied, which was devoted to hospital funds (TASMANIAN MAIL, 25 March 1893, p33).

23 MERCURY, 10 November 1884.

24 HAYWOOD, 1888, *op. cit.*, 15-16.

25 ANON, 1889; *New Tasmanian Guide Book for Visitors, Intending Settlers, Miners, Etc;* Mowbray, Launceston, 14. H Button wrote the later *Picturesque Tasmania* (undated), which in many sections is identical to the anonymous work.

26 BUTTON, H, approx 1892; *Picturesque Tasmania;* Button, Launceston, 169.

27 A young lady from Toorak whose Tasmanian adventures featured in the *Tasmanian Mail* in 1886 was shown over the mill. She found it 'all so wonderful and complicated' that she '[couldn't] describe it properly'. She also thought that her brother (who accompanied her) would get his next suit made of the material (TASMANIAN MAIL, 28 August 1886).

generating plant, which was installed in 1889 as the first example of its kind in Australia.

The inspection of government charitable institutions, another pursuit of the well-to-do, was also encouraged by the guide books.[28] The "lion" among these was the Hospital for the Insane at New Norfolk, to which visits were welcomed until at least 1908.[29] Tourists were invited to 'be impressed with the evidences of order, cleanliness and kindness which characterises the management',[30] and to enjoy the entertainments which were frequently given for the amusement of the patients.[31]

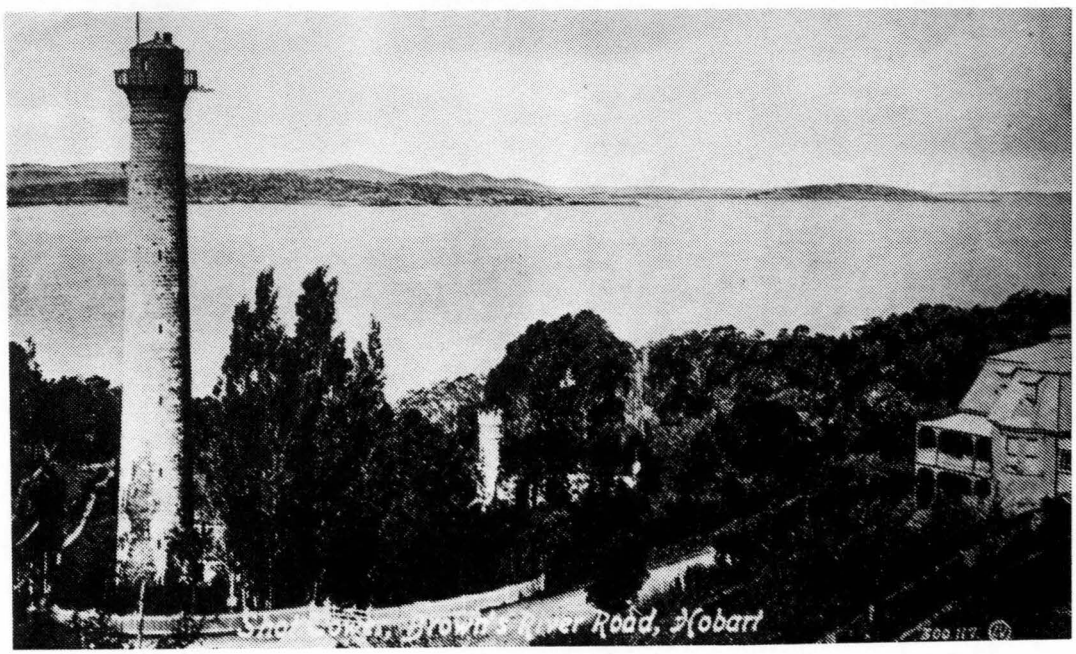

FIGURE 2.1

THE SHOT TOWER

While the rhetoric of most guide books implied that visitors would bring to such institutions a compassionate concern for those less fortunate than themselves, there was one guide book which implied a different motive. This was the *New Tasmanian Guide Book for Visitors, Intending Settlers, Miners, Etc.*, anonymously published in

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28 'No visitor to Tasmania should neglect to pay a visit to the orphanage', said the author of the Tasmanian Steam Navigation Company's guide. In order to secure admission to any such institution in either north or south, a visitor had simply to request the appropriate form from the Chief Secretary's office (BUTTON, *op. cit.*, 168).

29 'The Hospital for the Insane is in New Norfolk, and those who wish to inspect it have no difficulty in obtaining permits.' (GOVERNMENT OF TASMANIA, 1908; *Handbook of Tasmania*; Government Printer, Hobart, 84.)

30 TASMANIAN STEAM NAVIGATION COMPANY, *op. cit.*, 19.

31 WALCH, G, 1889; *Guide to Tasmania*; Huddart, Parker & Co., Melbourne, 87.

1889. Its probable author, H Button, found another institution altogether 'more interesting' than the New Norfolk Asylum. This was the Cascades Lunatic Asylum, Hobart, where:

> The inmates ... are nearly all criminals, and mostly the remnants of the convicts removed from Port Arthur.... Some of the inmates are dangerous, and are confined in dormitories and cells, according to the peculiar nature of their insanities.[32]

After writing off the nearby reformatory for boys and hospital for females as lacking interest, the author recommended to those with a taste for such things a visit to the Campbell Street gaol, where: '[t]he number of inmates is not numerous, but one or two of the worst Port Arthur men are still located'.

This overt reference to the continued presence of imperial convicts in the colony was unusual in a Tasmanian guide book, and may be partly explained by the book's Launceston origins.[33] Informally, however, it is likely that the locals took a certain pleasure in regaling even wealthy visitors with tales of the convict past. Evidence for this assertion is provided by a series of articles entitled *The Traveller* which appeared in the *Tasmanian Mail* in 1886. Purporting to be the diary of a young lady from the fashionable Melbourne suburb of Toorak who spent two summer months holidaying in Tasmania, the series contained the following entry:

> Another building, also part of the Cascades ... is a sort of prison where the few that remain of the old convicts and insane paupers are kept. It must be a miserable life. Mr Dash [a young Tasmanian] told us a great deal about them at lunch.[34]

Try as the conservative establishment might to deny the convict past, tourists continued to be intrigued by it, and to some this meant that there was money to be made out of it. The tensions inherent in this contradiction were reflected in the diversity of interpretations of the past which characterised the period.

2.2 INTERPRETATIONS OF THE PAST

In the years between 1856 and 1877, two main approaches to the problems of Tasmania's past – denial and sensationalism – were discerned in the work of those

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32 ANON, 1889, *op. cit.*, 14.

33 It was suggested in an interview given on *7.30 Report*, ABC TV, 30 July 1992 by the Tasmanian historian, W A Townsley, that those living in the north of the island have always been less sensitive about associations with the penal era than have Hobartians. However, he did not provide any evidence for his claim.

34 TASMANIAN MAIL, 11 September 1886, p27; *The Traveller*.

who interpreted the colony for tourists. Both approaches persisted into the 1880s, and a third approach also emerged. Informed by a genuine spirit of enquiry but nevertheless attracted by the romance of the convict past, this approach was epitomised in the work of John Watt Beattie, a photographer whom Michael Roe considers to have done 'more than anyone to shape the accepted visual image of Tasmania'.[35] Beattie's work also generated a healthy income. It will be argued later that, precisely because of its income generating capacity, Beattie's work formed a cornerstone of Tasmania's incipient heritage industry.

2.2.1 The official interpretation: 'literally no past'

In 1879, Tasmania contributed to the Sydney International Exhibition. T C Just's pamphlet, which accompanied the contribution, advertised Tasmania as its establishment wished it to be advertised. Readers interested in the colony's history were informed that 'everything worth recording' was to be found in John West's 'admirable history' of 1852. On the whole, Just maintained that 'nothing of unusual impact' had taken place in the colony, 'the decadence of the aboriginal race; the experiences and blunders of convict days' being nonchalantly dismissed.[36] In his second chapter, Just came to his main point: in the past, Tasmania had been noted only for scenery and climate; poverty had been her stumbling block – but now:

> like the prince in the fairy tale, who awoke the sleeping beauty with a kiss, the discovery of minerals is startling her from her lethargy and attracting to her shores energy and capital. In the future lies the history of Tasmania.[37]

With such a prospect, Just was able to conclude that for Tasmania 'there seems literally no past'. And indeed, for many, this attitude was based upon a very understandable desire for privacy. The lifelong stigma which attached to convicts has already been noted; in the 1880s, thirty years after the end of transportation, the children of convicts found themselves similarly stigmatised. When in 1879, some Port Arthur records were sold at auction in Melbourne and a few weeks later others were published, the *Tasmanian Mail* correspondent found it:

> a bitter, cruel thing to do, as there are many people in the colonies whose lives have been blameless, and against whom nothing can

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35 ROE, *op. cit.*, 168.

36 JUST, T C, 1879; *Tasmaniana! A Description of the Island of Tasmania and Its Resources;* Launceston, 10.

37 *Ibid.*, 14.

> be said except that their parents have been sent out. To revive the old, sad stories may do much harm, can do no good.[38]

Many therefore desired that all the old convict records should be destroyed as had been done in NSW when Henry Parkes became Premier.[39]

A less personal motive for wishing to suppress evidence of the penal period was the belief that 'to revive reminiscences of the past history of Tasmania [was] by no means consistent with the progress of intellectual refinement'.[40] The Tasmanian establishment was particularly sensitive to the voicing of such 'reminiscences' overseas. Consequently, when "Tasma" addressed the Royal Belgian Geographical Society on the subject of Tasmania in 1892 and word got back to her home, she was criticised for making it 'her principal business to dilate not upon its present prosperity, but upon the drawbacks of its early experiences'. Her efforts were compared with those of Bret Harte, whose 'fantastical writings' about the early days of California were said to be 'an absolute clog upon its civilisation'.[41]

The efforts to obliterate penal history from descriptions of Tasmania's past were particularly apparent in the tourist guides of the 1880s. Thus the Tasmanian Steam Navigation Company's 1886 *Guide for Visitors* stated that the Bridgewater Causeway was built when 'the government had a large amount of labour available for such purposes'.[42] And the old Richmond Road was 'one of those grand public works carried out in the days of the Imperial *regime*, when the government had an

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38 TASMANIAN MAIL SUPPLEMENT, 27 September 1879.

39 'One act in the career of Henry Parkes will ever be respected by me. When Sir Henry was first entrusted with the reigns of government, he directed all convict records to be burned in one of the thoroughfares of Sydney before the public gaze.' (Letter from G Hawthorn, Shipping Master of Hobart, to the *Bendigo Advertiser* complaining of an article which acclaimed Port Arthur as a tourist attraction. Reprinted: MERCURY, 25 March 1890.)

40 *Ibid.*

41 TASMANIAN MAIL, 11 June 1892, p20. This transgression was not the first which "Tasma" was presumed to have committed. In 1887, she penned an article for the *Australasian* entitled *Holiday Impressions of Tasmania*. In an otherwise inoffensive article, she made the mistake of mentioning the ruins of convict stations which could be viewed from the main line railway (AUSTRALASIAN, 30 March 1887). A fortnight after this appeared, "Trifles by the Way" in the *Tasmanian Mail* responded: 'I am not too thin skinned to hear a respectable and honest joke at the expense of the little island, but I do not admire, and cannot appreciate the learned, pretentious, and mightily patronising irony of "Tasma".... We are ... brought to Tasmania, to be told that, young as the city is, it is not without its historical ruins, while the traveller by railway is refreshed at frequent intervals on his journey with seeing the edifying sights of old convict stations!' (TASMANIAN MAIL, 13 April 1887.)

42 TASMANIAN STEAM NAVIGATION COMPANY, *op. cit.*, 18.

unlimited supply of labour'.[43] Given this degree of invention, it may be seen why the *Tasmanian Mail,* in reviewing this guide book, praised its omission of 'stereotypical material' contained in other guides.[44]

It is unlikely that Thomas' guide book was intended to be included in these 'other guides'. New editions of this publication appeared in 1879 and then annually between 1881 and 1885. Thomas, who in his original 1869 guide book had been indiscriminate in references to the convict past, now set about a conscientious bowdlerisation of his text. In 1881 he expurgated the following description of John Price, which had remained unaltered since 1869:

> ... whose memory I find is still execrated by some of his old Tasmanian acquaintances, and his murderers at Williamstown excused.[45]

The murder referred to by Thomas took place at Williamstown, Victoria in 1857, when Price was bludgeoned to death by convicts incarcerated in the hulk, *Success.* It seems likely that Thomas made his cut in order to avoid giving offence by the suggestion that any of Price's 'Tasmanian acquaintances' might still survive.

Thomas' 1879 edition carried a half-page section on Tasman Peninsula. In 1884 this section was revised. It now commenced: 'There is no Port Arthur now. The principal place on the Peninsula is named Carnarvon', and concluded with: 'Land is being rapidly taken up under the 14 years deferred payment system of the Waste Lands Act and consequently settlement is progressing in this part of Tasmania'.[46] Nowhere in this section was the penal past of Tasman Peninsula mentioned.

The following year, Thomas' final edition of the *Guide* went further still by omitting *all* possible reference to convict days. Even the paragraph urging visitors to 'disremember ... the antecedents of the colony' was deleted; and, lest a superseded name ring an unwelcome bell, so was the simple sentence: 'There is no Port Arthur now'.[47]

The myth which it seemed prudent to perpetrate was well expressed in 1889 in *The New Tasmanian Guide Book:*

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43 TASMANIAN STEAM NAVIGATION COMPANY, *op. cit.*, 65.

44 TASMANIAN MAIL, 17 April, p9.

45 THOMAS, 1869, *op. cit.*, 86-87.

46 THOMAS, H, 1884; *Guide to Excursionists between Australia and Tasmania;* Melbourne, 161.

47 THOMAS, H, 1885; *Guide to Excursionists between Australia and Tasmania;* Melbourne, 161.

> Transportation ceased in 1853, and the convicts, being mostly childless, have left little trace behind them, unless in many well made roads, huge causeways or breakwaters, bridges and buildings.[48]

But despite the many descendents of convicts who *did* remain, Tasmania in the 1880s had indeed undergone a social as well as an economic change. In the 1850s and 1860s it had one of the highest crime rates of all the Australian colonies; in the 1880s it had one of the lowest.[49] This fact was seized upon with pride by Tasmanians, and used to advertise the colony internationally to intending migrants. C D Buckler, for example, wrote in The *Colony of Tasmania,* published in London in 1883, that the island colony, 'from having been a prison home of criminals ... [had] become one of the most moral countries in the world'.[50]

But whether the establishment liked it or not, tales of the Australian colony's seamy past were being circulated and were achieving immense popularity. Paradoxically, perhaps, they were also appreciated by many Tasmanians.

2.2.2 The sensational interpretation: 'a mass of criminal and revolting humanity'

As the Tasmanian author, Peter Conrad, has written with Australia in mind:

> As soon as the scrub is cleared, the houses built, and the natives dispossessed, a new country must set about furnishing itself with a literature.[51]

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48 ANON, 1889, *op. cit.*, 33.

49 Between 1883 and 1887, Tasmania had an annual crime rate of 0.31 Supreme Court convictions per 1,000 people compared with 0.59 per 1,000 in eastern Australia as a whole (REYNOLDS, *op. cit.*).

50 BUCKLER, C D, 1883; *The Colony of Tasmania*; London, 1. The rule that Tasmania should be portrayed as moral and crime free in tourist literature also caused writers to censor their own work. Haywood's first guide book of 1885 recommended tourists to inspect the Chinese cemetery at Thomas Plains, then added: 'This time last year ... we buried 'Hah Hang', a Chinaman, whose mangled body was found within two miles of the Plains on the road to Moorina, which the tourist will pass as he goes on his journey. A shameful fact it is, that although within the space of two years, no less than three Chinamen were murdered, no clue to the perpetrator has ever been discovered.' (HAYWOOD, 1885a; *Visitors' and Colonists' Guide*; Hobart, 84.) Later that year, when Haywood released his second edition, he still recommended a visit to the cemetery; but all reference to the murders was deleted (HAYWOOD, 1885b, *op. cit.*, 98). The author had evidently come to realise in the space of a few months that such stories were not the ones that the Tasmanian establishment wished to be circulated.

51 CONRAD, P, 1990; *Down Home: Revisiting Tasmania*; Minerva, London, 196.

The Australian fiction of the 1870s and 1880s looked back to the past for its stories. It was a past peopled by convicts and bushrangers, a past which, as the recent experiences of the Kelly gang showed, had not been left so very far behind. Rolf Boldrewood's *Robbery Under Arms* appeared in the *Sydney Mail* between July 1882 and August 1883, and was published in London in 1888. John O'Reilly's convict novel *Moondyne Joe* was published in America in 1879. Besides the novels, there were many short stories published in the magazines of this period. Price Warung, who worked for a time as a journalist in Tasmania, began publishing his short stories in the *Bulletin* during the 1880s, and the first of his four collected volumes, *Tales of the Convict System*, was released in 1892. Marcus Clarke also capitalised upon his Tasmanian research by producing several semi-documentary tales of convict days. But by far the most widely read and well-known piece of Australian fiction of the decade was the latter's *His Natural Life*. References to this work abound in the tourist guides written since 1880, its significance being made clear by the Tasmanian writer, Garnet Walch, in his *Guide to Tasmania*, published by the shipping company, Huddart Parker & Co., in 1889:

> No one who has read Marcus Clarke's powerful romance, *His Natural Life* – and what Australian worthy of the name has not – but would like to see for himself the actual localities – the scenic effects, so to speak, of that drama of real life. And once in Tasmania, he can easily satisfy his wish, partly if not wholly.[52]

Written in order to encourage Victorians to book passages on Huddart and Parker's vessels, Walch's guide takes the hackneyed form of a fictionalised tour to Tasmania made by a party from Melbourne. The evening before their voyage finds them 'dipping once more into the pages of *His Natural Life* as a sort of preparatory appetiser for [the] trip'.[53]

It is also interesting to note that episodes invented by Clarke quickly became accepted as facts. Among these was the 'suicide pact' of the boy convicts, Tommy and Billy. Having described the 'horrors' of the Point Puer boys' prison, one Port Arthur visitor of 1892 continued:

> Perhaps the most painful of these cases was that in which two boys, wearied of the death in life to which they had been condemned, jumped one stormy night from the bluff into the seething surf below. Their bodies were found in the morning terribly battered about by being dashed against the rocks, their hands still clasped together as at the moment when they made their terrible leap. It is indeed pitiable to reflect that mere children

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52 WALCH, *op. cit.*, 91.

53 *Ibid.*, 13.

> should have been treated with such rigour as to cause them to seek a release from their sufferings in this manner.[54]

So were the myths of convictism perpetuated by fiction. And convict themes were not restricted to prose fiction alone. Australian melodrama, which flourished from 1870 until the end of the century, also selected its material from Australia's colourful past.[55] The actor/manager, George Darrell, wrote *Transported for Life* in 1877 and *The Sunny South*, which had a bushranging theme, in 1883. Darrell's rival actor/manager, Alfred Dampier, also wrote for the stage. He wrote an adaptation of *Robbery under Arms* and in 1890 collaborated with Garnet Walch to produce one of several stage versions of *His Natural Life.*

Both of these melodramas were presented in Tasmania, the version of *His Natural Life* being that written by George Leitch for his own Melbourne-based company. It was performed in the Theatre Royal, Hobart in October 1886. There is no evidence that objections were raised against this presentation as there had been against the serialised publication of the novel fifteen years earlier. There was, however, a degree of apprehension, for the management was concerned that:

> in dramatising local, though well nigh forgotten events, almost on the very scene, and amid actual surroundings, they [would] have to face a host of critics. In pit and gallery, in stalls and boxes, they will find them....[56]

There was also the possibility that 'the ethics of good taste and discretion' might have been disregarded or that there might have been 'undue pandering to morbid craving for sensational excitement'. The management need not have worried. No play ever produced in Hobart caused more interest or drew together a more varied audience. Over one thousand shillings were tendered for standing room alone, and people were turned away from the theatre a full fifteen minutes before the curtain rose.

As the *Mercury* put it: 'the play depart[ed] slightly' from the novel by having Sylvia remember Dawes actions in saving her life – not on board the doomed ship, as in the published book – but at Port Arthur, upon which 'she falls into her true lover's arms, where her father finds her'. But once it has been explained to him who Dawes

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54 BALLARD, C W and LUKE, E T, 1893; *A Southern Breeze: the Record of an Easter Trip*; Richards & Co, Ballarat, 8.

55 Although Australian melodramas had been successfully staged for several decades, it was not until Walter Cooper began writing for the Sydney stage in 1868 that the local genre began to find success. See REES, L, 1973; *The Making of Australian Drama: Volume 1*; Angus and Robertson, 28.

56 MERCURY, 25 October 1886.

really is, his objection to having a convict for a son-in-law is 'entirely removed'. It is presumed that hero and heroine live "happily ever after".

Romanticised even more than the original novel, the play righted all wrongs done to the only characters the audience was encouraged to care about. Justice was finally done to the 'innocent' man; as for the rest, they were brutes, gaoled and gaolers alike, and the System which bound them, a thing of the past and 'well nigh forgotten'. Despite the 'repulsive accuracy' with which the Port Arthur chain gang was portrayed, it served merely as a colourful backdrop to the drama. Clearly there was nothing in the play that would render Tasmania's past dangerously alive, no suggestion that the whole System had been, as Clarke believed, one monstrous blunder, let alone that the present, respectable, highly moral generation of Tasmanians was in the least tainted by it. This message evidently satisfied the packed house, for, after a show which lasted some four hours, the actors were called on stage time and again.[57]

George Leitch returned to Hobart with a much polished version of his adaptation in 1889. It seemed to the *Mercury* critic that there were few in the crowded house who were not familiar with the original novel, 'and many of them were anxious to let all near them know they had done so'. Once more, the season proved a great hit, the reviewer's only concern being over slight inaccuracies in the scene painter's depiction of Port Arthur.[58]

In spite of the well publicised efforts of those who sought to suppress details of Tasmania's penal past, it seems reasonable to conclude that in the last decades of the nineteenth century, the citizens of Hobart by and large developed as great an appetite for Gothic romanticisation of their island's history as did their neighbours across Bass Strait. This view is born out by the local reaction to the ex-prison hulk, *Success*, when it was moored in Hobart harbour as a tourist attraction in 1894.

The *Success* had been on view in Melbourne since 1891. The upper deck of the hulk, it was claimed, was preserved as it had been when the vessel was used to house convicts. Now, it housed convict relics, including "Ned Kelly's Armour". In the middle and lower decks were twenty two wax figures of convicts, plus the Kelly gang and a scene depicting the murder of John Price. The clothes and leg irons fitted to the dummies were said to be those actually worn by the figures shown. Brief details of their infamous careers were supplied in the catalogue.[59]

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57 Details of the first night reception taken from the review in the MERCURY, 26 October 1886.

58 MERCURY, 14 February 1889.

59 ANON, 1894; *The Prison Hulk, Success*; Tasmanian News, Hobart.

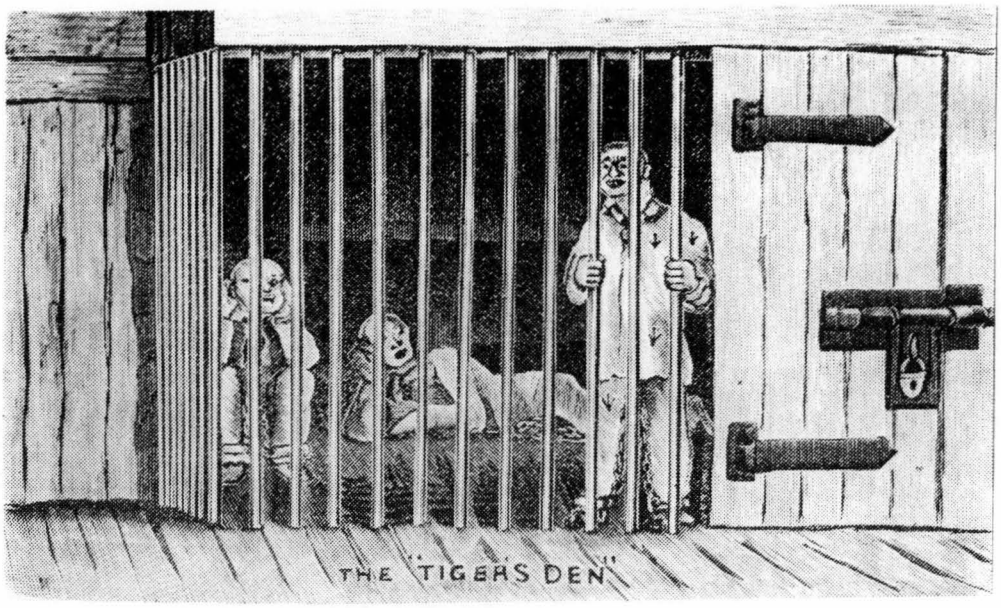

FIGURE 2.2

THE CONVICT HULK "SUCCESS": ILLUSTRATION

If tourists wished to learn more about the *Success*, they could buy a detailed history of the ship written by "Old Time".[60] The Victorian convict hulks, the author wrote, held 'the greatest gathering of scoundrelism and crime of every hue that had ever assembled south of the line'. Those immortalised in wax were a 'mass of criminal and revolting humanity'.[61]

It will be recalled that it was convicts from the *Success* who murdered John Price in 1857. "Old Time"'s views on "The Demon of Norfolk Island" were somewhat eccentric. 'A fairer man than Mr Price was never placed in charge of prisoners', he wrote. 'If a convict behaved himself, he had no better friend, in a way, than the Inspector-General.' As might be expected, "Old Time" denied that Price had 'brought his murder upon himself'.[62]

It is difficult to know whether such extreme views struck a chord with Tasmanians. Quotations taken from the Melbourne visitors' book are certainly highly appreciative, one parent's comments suggesting that the show be used as a means of educating the young, presumably against their becoming involved in a life of crime. 'My sons were immensely pleased', he wrote, 'and are very anxious for all the

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60 "OLD TIME", 1891; *The Convict Hulk "Success"*; Spectator, Melbourne. This history claimed that the vessel was launched in 1840, whereas the catalogue claimed 1790; it might, therefore, be wise to exercise caution when reading either account.

61 "OLD TIME", *op. cit.*, 8.

62 *Ibid.*, 53.

school to come and see it'.[63] Whether school parties in Tasmania were taken on tours of the *Success* has not come to light, but Robert Hughes maintained that 'most of the population of Tasmania ... trooped through her'.[64] They had plenty in time in which to do so, for the vessel was open to the public from 10am until 10pm every day, Sundays included.[65]

The success of the *Success* and its kindred attractions was clear proof that a market for the convict past existed among Tasmanians as much as among mainland tourists. While this functioned as a challenge to those who sought to deny the past, it also acted as a spur to others who saw in convict history not simply the potential for profit, but also potent lessons for the Tasmanians of the present.

2.2.3 Towards a historical interpretation

The 'new' approach to historiography was described by the Tasmanian solicitor and historian, James Backhouse Walker, in a preface to a series of papers on early Tasmania which he published in 1889:

> The days have passed when history was written with the object of feeding national vanity, when it was a chronicle of war and diplomacy, and of the doings of princes and nobles, while the struggles and sufferings of the common herd were ignored as "beneath the dignity of history". In these days a new school of historians has arisen whose aim it is to investigate the growth and development of communities, and to them the despised and nameless crowd is precisely the most important part of their theme.[66]

Walker was conscious that there were those in the community who believed their early history would better be left unwritten and all records swept away. He acknowledged that much of the colony's early history was a subject for regret, but believed that Tasmanians could pride themselves on breaking free from 'their birth's invidious bar'; now it was opportune to study the past, for 'every phase of

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63 "OLD TIME", *op. cit.*, appendix.

64 HUGHES, *op. cit.*, 601.

65 When the *Success* left Hobart, it was for Sydney, after which she was to sail for London 'where she [could] not fail to become a powerful rival to Madam Tussauds', and then America ("OLD TIME", *op. cit.*, preface). Unfortunately for her proprietor, the *Success* did not even open in Sydney. As Hughes wrote: 'She was promptly censored: Scuttled in the dead of night by indignant citizens [of Sydney] who did not wish to be reminded of the Stain, *Success* sank at her moorings with the loss of all waxworks (HUGHES, *op. cit.*, 601).

66 TASMANIAN MAIL, 26 October 1889, p5.

development – even those we can view only with regret – has its lesson, if we know how to use it'.

Walker's series of papers were written at the request of the liberal Premier, P O Fysh, and based upon original documents obtained by James Bonwick.[67] The papers were read before the Royal Society, then printed as Parliamentary Papers.[68] A selection from them was offered to a wider public by inclusion in the *Tasmanian Mail*. While the work certainly shed new light on the details of early settlement, it contained little that would be likely to offend.

The same could not be said for the work of Walker's friend and fellow Minerva Club member, the photographer and antiquarian, John Watt Beattie. But Beattie's interest in history, though serious, was more pragmatic than Walker's. Recognising its value as a tourist attraction, he was able to extract a considerable profit from his passion. It may also be stated with confidence that Beattie did more than any other nineteenth century figure to develop Tasmania as a tourist destination.

J W Beattie was born in 1859 in Scotland, and emigrated with his parents to Tasmania in 1878. The family cleared a small bush farm near New Norfolk, and it was to his time there that Beattie traced his interest in convictism:

> Those were the days when my soul got soaked in the lore of Port Arthur, all our working men being "old hands", and the romance of their experience fascinated me.[69]

Beattie's father was a photographer, and back in Scotland Beattie had studied photography under the scientist and inventor, Michael Faraday.[70] He was able to hold his first exhibition in Tasmania in 1879 at the age of twenty. For the next three years, he remained self-employed. Then in 1882 Anson Brothers, a firm of Hobart photographers, offered him a job. Beattie established himself as a fine landscape photographer in the romantic tradition. He was an admirer of Piguenit, and like the artist he made many heroic trips into remote parts of Tasmania in order to capture scenes of wild beauty.[71]

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67 Bonwick, originally a school teacher who migrated to Tasmania from Britain in 1841, was himself a prolific author of popular histories. *The Bushrangers* (1856) and *The Lost Tasmanian Race* (1870) are his best known works.

68 JPP 1889/107-108-108A-108B, JPP 1890/117, JPP 1891/180.

69 TASSEL, M and WOOD, D, 1981; *Tasmanian Photographer – John Watt Beattie*; Launceston, 11.

70 CATO, J, 1947; *I Can Take It: the Autobiography of a Photographer*; Georgian House, Melbourne, 22.

71 ROE, *op. cit.*

One of the Anson brothers is recorded as having taken a number of photographs of Port Arthur in 1884,[72] and it may be assumed that Beattie himself began making photographic excursions there at about this time. He was an enthusiastic collector and always returned from Port Arthur with 'some leg-irons, manacles, hand-cuffs, an original cat-o'-nine tails (for males or females), a batch of ticket of leave documents, a "hue & cry" poster for an absconder, some magistrates' orders for floggings, or a collection of pewter stamped with the broad arrow'.[73]

In 1891, Beattie bought out Anson Brothers. Under his energetic management, the business quickly expanded. He was said to bring back enough negatives from his field trips to keep his staff busy for half a year.[74] His collection of historical artifacts grew, and was opened to the public as a private museum in the 1890s. Beattie also began to give illustrated lectures on a variety of topics, and sold the texts of his lectures accompanied by copies of the slides. His topics included the natural history and minerology of Tasmania as well as convict and Aboriginal themes. While convictism held for him a romantic appeal, his work was regarded as having 'a scholarly concern for historical accuracy'.[75] His accounts of Port Arthur were thought of as 'steer[ing] between sensation and sentimentality'.[76] In 1890, Beattie was elected to membership of the Royal Society, and in 1899 he helped establish its historical section. Bishop Montgomery was the first president, J W Beattie and J Backhouse Walker the two vice-presidents.[77]

Beattie's abiding historical preoccupation was Port Arthur. In the early 1890s, he published the first book devoted to the settlement. It included David Burn's 1842 essay, excerpts from convict records and poems written by a sensitive if mawkish Point Puer teacher. In a foreword, Beattie regretted that no complete history of Port Arthur could be written because so many original records had been lost.[78]

Beattie's work apart, Port Arthur's 'wonderful history' was subjected in the 1880s to only the first two of the three types of interpretation covered in this chapter: denial

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72 TASMANIAN MAIL, 19 March 1884, p20.

73 CATO, J, 1955; *The Story of the Camera;* Institute of Australian Photography, Melbourne, 83. Cato's list includes items unlikely to have been used at Port Arthur. Either it was carelessly compiled or Port Arthur became a kind of central exchange for collectors of convict artifacts.

74 CATO, 1947, *op. cit.*, 22.

75 TASSEL and WOOD, *op. cit.*, 11.

76 ROE, *op. cit.*

77 MERCURY, 5 June 1930; *The Death of Mr J W Beattie.*

78 BEATTIE, J W, undated; *Port Arthur, Van Diemen's Land;* Beattie, Hobart.

and sensationalism. At the old settlement itself, that history was inextricably mixed with the development of the new town which now occupied the site, the town of Carnarvon.

2.3 THE GROWTH OF A TOURIST TOWN

2.3.1 Locals and visitors

Initially, the new town of Carnarvon was slow to grow. Despite the realisation that not all the land on Tasman Peninsula was barren, only five out of seventy five town lots offered for sale in August 1878 were purchased. By March 1880, although a new settler could declare that Carnarvon was 'coming into bloom ... at a terrific rate', the idea of forming into a separate municipality was a proposition fit only for ridicule.[79]

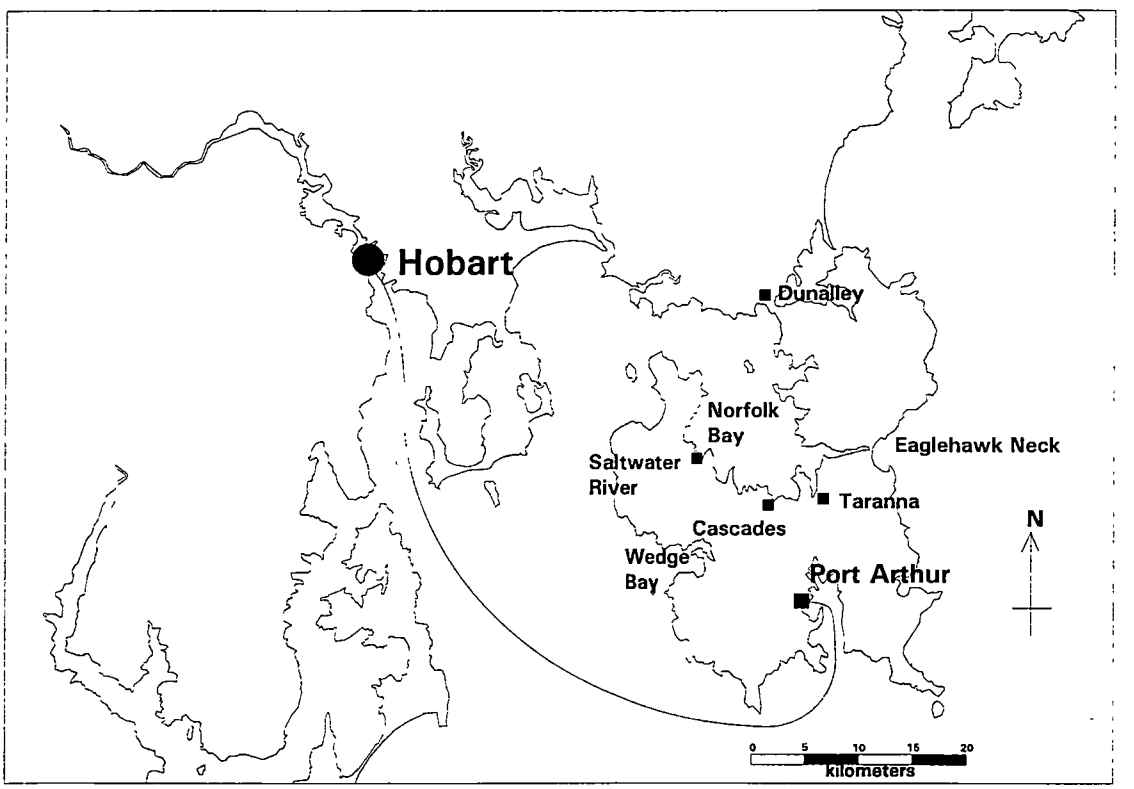

FIGURE 2.3

THE TASMAN PENINSULA

When the government placed additional Port Arthur buildings on the market during the first half of the 1880s, low prices made them attractive. The Hospital, for

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79 TASMANIAN MAIL, 27 July 1878, p14, 10 August 1878, p3 and 13 March 1880, p16. In fact, it was not until 1889 that Carnarvon was proclaimed a town under the *Town Boards Act 1884* (HOBART GAZETTE, 23 July and 13 August 1889).

instance, was purchased in 1885 by the Catholic Church for £300. The Bishop of Hobart, Dr Murphy, believed that for a further £200 it could be converted into a boys' home and college which in Hobart would have cost between £7,000 and £8,000.[80] In 1883, a recently arrived migrant, Colonel Garnett, purchased the substantial Parsonage and Accountant's House with the intention of converting them into guest houses. There was speculation that 'two Melbourne gentlemen' would have bid against Garnett and driven the price up, had anyone tendered for construction of the local jetties.[81]

The lack of amenities was not restricted to jetties. By the end of 1882 there was no telegraph or doctor on the Peninsula, no coroner for fifty miles, deliveries of fresh supplies were infrequent and the bridges on the road between Norfolk Bay and Carnarvon were broken. It was alleged that these drawbacks were contributing to a falling off in the rate of settlement, which in May 1883 came to a standstill.[82]

The following month a deputation waited on the Minister for Lands and Works and put it to him that if properly developed, the Peninsula could become 'the Brighton of the Australias'.[83] The settlers of Carnarvon, whatever drew them to the spot in the first place, were coming to realise that their future depended upon the success of the local tourist trade. Despite scant publicity, this trade had grown markedly since Port Arthur was abandoned in 1877.

Initially, visitors travelled by steamer directly to Carnarvon. The excursions were generally organised as fund-raisers by charitable organisations, and catered almost exclusively for Tasmanian sight-seers. As was remarked after an Easter trip as early as 1880:

> Port Arthur continues to be one of our most popular resorts; and any body that arranges for an excursion to that place, may, weather permitting, depend upon its being very remunerative.[84]

On this trip, 900 passengers sailed and 450 more were left at the quay. However, the point about the weather was well made, for on this long route sea-sickness was a common complaint.[85] But such was the demand for visits to Port Arthur that it was

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80 CATHOLIC STANDARD, October 1885, p343.

81 TASMANIAN MAIL, 20 January 1883, p20. In fact, Garnett did not convert his houses into tourist accommodation.

82 TASMANIAN MAIL, 2 December 1882, p20 and 25 May, 1883, p20.

83 TASMANIAN MAIL, 23 June, 1883, pp9-10.

84 TASMANIAN MAIL SUPPLEMENT, 3 April 1880.

85 In December 1880 between six and seven hundred passengers booked onto the *SS Southern Cross* which had been hired by the Southern Tasmanian Volunteer Artillery Corps. The captain didn't want to go on

only a matter of time before an entrepreneur set up a regular service by a less hazardous route.

This occurred in 1881 when the Whitehouse Brothers began operating a bi-weekly service between Hobart and Norfolk Bay. From there the ten kilometre overland journey to Port Arthur had to be made on foot. The 13 ton steamer *Pinafore* left Hobart each Monday and Thursday and returned on Tuesday and Friday, thus requiring passengers to spend at least one night on the Peninsula.[86] For several years, there was no accommodation available at Norfolk Bay, and passengers leaving on the 8am sailing were obliged either to walk from Carnarvon through the night or to sleep in a leaky old prisoners' dormitory. Eventually, Whitehouse Bros bought the Commissariat Store, which, in spite of some local opposition and an initial rejection by the Licensing Board, was opened as a hotel in March 1883. Almost immediately, large numbers of visitors were making use of it.[87]

Occasionally, vessels would be chartered to sail to Carnarvon. In fact, before Whitehead's regular service, this was the only way that visitors could make the trip when there was no excursion planned. In 1878, for example, fifty 'private gentlemen', principally visitors from other colonies, hired the *Truganini* for a day trip.[88] Sailing vessels could also be chartered, and 'for moderate sums' deep sea fishermen could be persuaded to take parties to either side of the Peninsula.[89] In addition, large steamers regularly carried parties of excursionists to Eaglehawk Neck.

The steamer excursions were not expensive. The day return trip to Carnarvon (which, incidentally, was always advertised as "Port Arthur") cost 5/- for adults and 2/6d for children. However, when demand exceeded supply, surprisingly high prices could be offered for tickets, 30/- being unsuccessfully tendered on Boxing Day 1884 when 850 crammed into the *SS Flora*.[90] A band frequently accompanied the passengers, playing on the voyage unless rough seas prevented it. At Port Arthur, it was generally possible to have the buildings 'thrown open for inspection',

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account of the mountainous seas, but the passengers persuaded him. The journey back was described as horrific. One passenger sustained a broken leg, and as a journalist remarked: 'seldom had excursionists been landed at the wharf in so thoroughly woebegone a condition' (MERCURY, 28 December 1880).

86 HAYWOOD, 1885b, *op. cit.*, 77.

87 TASMANIAN MAIL, 2 December 1882, p20, 24 February 1883, p20 and 7 April 1883, p10.

88 TASMANIAN MAIL, 23 February 1878.

89 THOMAS, 1879, *op. cit.*, 113.

90 MERCURY, 27 December 1884.

although on one occasion, when the correct procedures had not been complied with, even an MP in the party was unable to prevail upon the custodian to open up.[91] The Model Prison was judged the greatest attraction, and it was standard for tourists to experience what it was like to be shut in a cell.[92].

Descriptions of the behaviour of large parties of day trippers at Port Arthur suggest that their response to the buildings was far from reflective. The party which descended on the settlement on Boxing Day 1884 made straight for the buildings, and:

> very speedily the gloomy chambers were thronged by merry crowds, who peered into dungeons, danced in the mess rooms, shut themselves up in the horrible pens of the convict chapel, stole bibles as relics, and generally made the most of an unwonted occasion. A good many also pervaded neighbouring paddocks and gardens, and fruit trees suffered somewhat at the hands of unthinking intruders.[93]

"Souveniring", it seems, was carried on as long as it was still possible to find souvenirs. In 1885, the excursionists on Boxing Day behaved 'after the customary fashion of "British sightseers" [and] everything that was movable was carried off as mementos, including a 30lb cannon ball'.[94] Nor was souveniring restricted to Tasmanians. Late in the 1880s, the sentry box outside the Penitentiary was 'bought' by a tripper and taken back to Melbourne.[95]

From the small amount of available evidence, it would seem as though visitors to the Peninsula who travelled in small groups by the *Pinafore* treated the Port Arthur site with more respect than did those who descended there in the large groups of fun-seekers who travelled by steamer. Those taking Whitehead's vessel also paid more, the fare in 1885 being 7/- single and 12/- return. For their money, these tourists were taken on a voyage which stopped at Dunalley, a pioneer district where there had been a hotel since 1866, then at the old penal stations of Saltwater River, Impression Bay, Cascades and finally Taranna.[96] From Taranna, the rough track to

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91 TASMANIAN MAIL, 3 January 1880, p8.

92 At times this could provide them with more than they bargained for, as two young ladies found to their cost when a cell door locked on them during an 1880 excursion. The custodian (who was in possession of keys) had to be found before they could be released (TASMANIAN MAIL, 13 November 1880, p10).

93 MERCURY, 27 December 1884.

94 MERCURY, 28 December 1885.

95 PRETEYMAN, E R; *Some Notes on the Penal Settlement at Port Arthur;* Tasmanian Archives, TCP 365.9946.

96 HAYWOOD, 1885b, *op. cit.*, 77.

Carnarvon could be accomplished on foot, or by horse, trap or bullock cart.[97] Since the boat did not arrive at Taranna until 4pm, visitors generally spent the night at that settlement, and travelled to Carnarvon the following morning.

At Port Arthur, Mr Evenden, the official caretaker, and later Mr Bellamie, the local Inspector of Police, could be prevailed upon to show tourists around the old buildings. Both were able to provide information about their past use, the former no doubt drawing on his many years of experience with the Convict Department.[98] To acquire the services of the latter, it was required to produce the 'necessary authority' from the Minister for Lands and Works.[99]

The regime which convicts were subjected to in the Model Prison appears to have captured the imagination with most force:

> We heard with horror of the systematic cruelty of vindictive punishment; how men lived on year after year in solitary banishment from their fellow men, with only the warder's rounds, an occasional visit from the chaplain or a bottle of physic from the doctor. It seemed like eternal silence; but we were taken through one narrow passage to another until we reached a cell of eternal gloom, where in pitch darkness men were confined often for a week at a time.[100]

This "refractory", "dumb" or "dark" cell 'where one might howl himself hoarse, and no one a foot outside would be disturbed' had long intrigued visitors.[101] In *His*

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97 One group used 'all the horses, conveyances and saddles on the north of the Peninsula.... [Despite this, some visitors] still had to come on foot' (TASMANIAN MAIL, 19 April, 1884).

98 John Evenden was remembered by Martin Cash c1844 (MACFIE, 1989; Changes and Continuations: the Post-penal Settlement of Tasman Peninsula, in SMITH (Ed.),*Tasman Peninsula: Is History Enough?*; Royal Society of Tasmania, Hobart, 97-106).

99 WALCH, *op. cit.*, 23.

100 TASMANIAN MAIL, 17 May 1884, p28. 'The Model Prison [1848] was designed by the Royal Engineers as a "perfect" prison, and modelled on Pentonville, London to provide a non-violent and "improved" method of punishment and reform. Under the "Silent" or "Separate" system, 50 prisoners lived and worked in separate cells, in total silence and anonymity. Inmates were called by number, not by name, and to prevent recognition, head-masks were worn in exercise yards and at chapel (which also featured individual boxes). Warders communicated by hand signals, and wore slippers on felt carpet to deaden sound. The aim was to reform prisoners through religious contemplation and solitary work. Inmates were initially to be confined for a proportion of their sentences, but the Model Prison became a place of punishment for the worst cases.' (PORT ARTHUR HISTORIC SITE MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY, 1989; *Port Arthur*; pamphlet.)

101 TASMANIAN MAIL, 5 July 1884, p28.

Natural Life, Marcus Clarke has Maurice Frere shut his wife in it for a joke,[102] and a visitor of 1884, summoning up spectres of the past, imagined thrown inside 'a high-spirited man, who possibly glared fiercely at a cringing, hypocritical skunk of a convict constable, who taunted him to produce the glare'.[103]

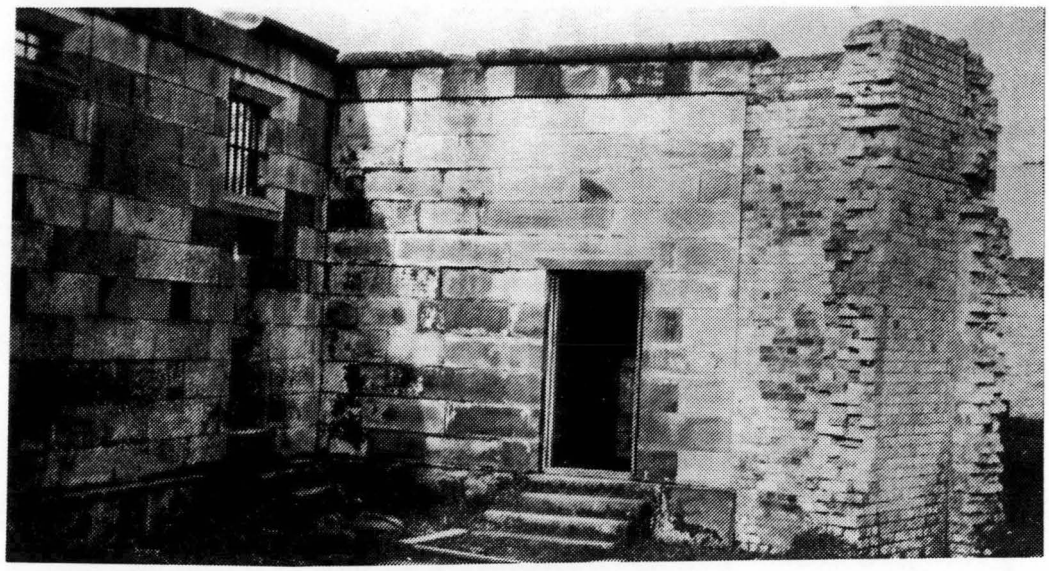

FIGURE 2.4

ENTRANCE TO THE "DUMB CELL"

The chapel at the Model also exerted a fascination. Descriptions were provided of the 'horrible ingenuity'[104] with which the tiered pews and complex procedures were designed so as to prevent the masked convicts from catching sight of one anothers' faces. An English visitor wondered of the prisoner:

> Boxed away with the preacher's voice ringing in his ears, did he ever wonder who was in the adjoining "pew", whether perchance it was a playmate or a brother whom he had left at home with every prospect of soon following? How maimed and crippled the beautiful prayers must have been...[105]

Next to the Model Prison is the Asylum. As one early visitor wrote: 'its contiguity is suggestive. [For if] the brain of a criminal under the ordeal of the Model became deranged the asylum became his home'.[106]

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102 CLARKE, undated, *op. cit.*, 308.

103 TASMANIAN MAIL, 28 June 1884, p28.

104 This phrase was attributed to Governor Strahan, who arrived in Tasmania in 1881, and made a Vice-Regal visit to Carnarvon in February 1883 (TASMANIAN MAIL, 24 February 1883, p20).

105 TASMANIAN MAIL, 17 May 1884, p28; *Pleasure Seekers Aboard the "Huon"*.

106 TASMANIAN MAIL, 5 July 1884, p28.

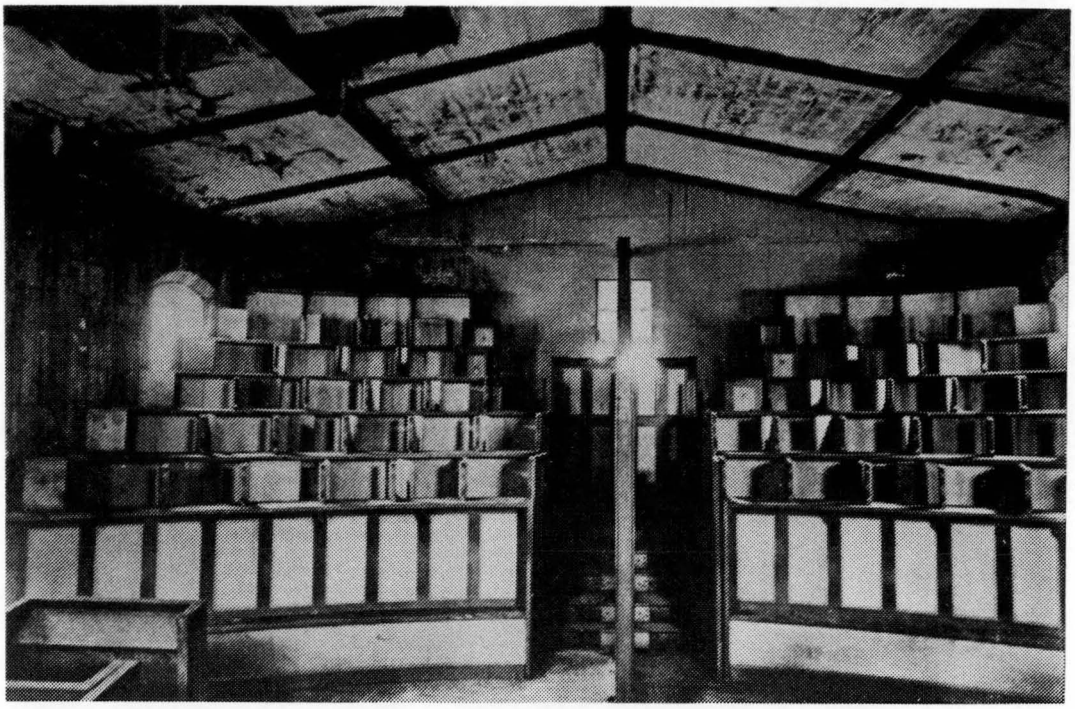

FIGURE 2.5

THE CHAPEL IN THE MODEL PRISON

The two other large government buildings regularly opened for visitors were the Penitentiary and the Church. The former impressed by its sheer size, but was considered 'big, dull, monotonous'.[107] When originally constructed by convict tradesmen in 1844 as a flour mill and granary, it was said to be the largest building in Australia. A decade later it was made even bigger and converted to a penitentiary capable of holding over 600 men. Several early commentators provided detailed descriptions of its dimensions and lay-out, yet it did not appear to provoke much in the way of imaginative response.

Not so the Church. This striking stone building of Norman Gothic design was regarded as the ornament of Port Arthur. It was designed possibly by a Port Arthur official and Henry Laing, a convict and architect,[108] but early folklore held it to have been designed solely by a convict forger who also supervised the convict labour. For this he was said to have received a free pardon and money with which he started a business in a neighbouring colony.[109] However, this widely believed story has not been substantiated.

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107 TASMANIAN MAIL, 16 March 1889, p7.

108 PORT ARTHUR HISTORIC SITE MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY, *op. cit.*

109 TASMANIAN MAIL, 16 March 1889, p7.

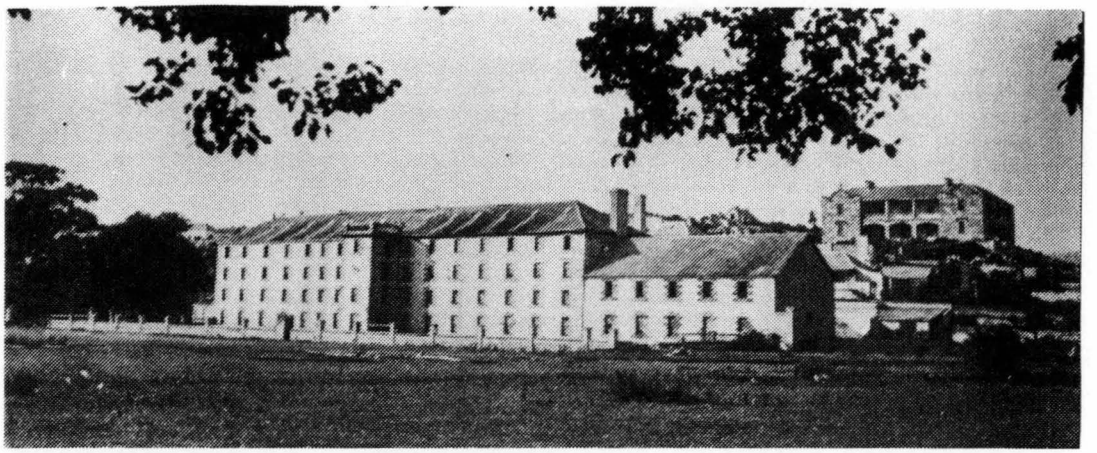

FIGURE 2.6

THE PENITENTIARY, PORT ARTHUR

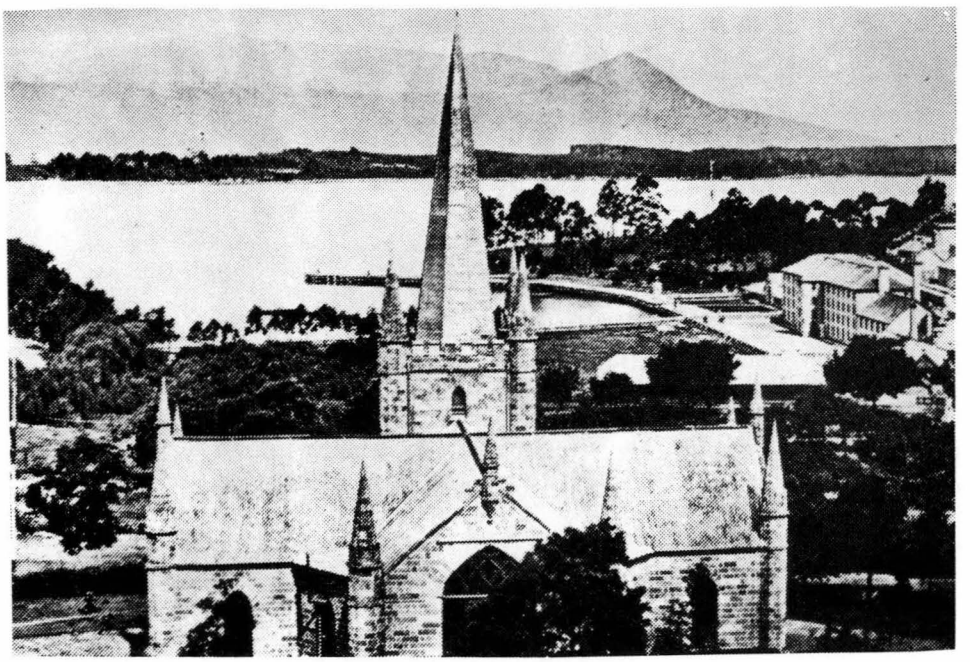

FIGURE 2.7

PORT ARTHUR CHURCH

Ironically, a boost was given to the romantic appeal of the Church on 29 February 1884, when it was badly burned in a bush fire. Warnings had already been given to the government about the need to remove scrub from around the settlement after a fire nearly destroyed the Commandant's House in 1880, but they had not been heeded.[110] The Church was ignited when a servant of one of the Carnarvon settlers attempted a controlled burn on his master's land. Despite a heroic attempt by locals

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110 CSD 13/23/257: Caretaker to Colonial Secretary, 28 December 1880.

to contain the blaze, when the fire was eventually extinguished little remained of the building but its bare walls.[111] Soon, the ivy, which had long been a feature of the Church, began to cover its remains. Barely two months after the fire, an English visitor wrote prophetically:

> You have a ready way of making ruins in this colony. At home we prefer to conduct a visitor through the crumbling cloisters of some ancient abbey.... Nothing less than a church battered down by Oliver Cromwell is an accepted ruin. But here, in Port Arthur, is a modern church without a roof, with broken fronts, with perished windows, and to complete the picture, with green ivy climbing up its black and crippled walls. Yes, it is undoubtedly a ruin.... Ours take a great many years to crumble away.... [But in Australia:] A bush fire; an unfortunate change of wind, a handful of sparks, and the ruin progresses until in a week it is as complete as though built in the days of Constantine.[112]

In its ruined state, Port Arthur's Church took on iconic status and played a considerable part in drawing tourists to the site. Beattie's well-known photograph of the building, taken during the 1880s, emphasised its picturesque Gothic quality, and was widely displayed.

FIGURE 2.8

AFTER THE FIRE (PHOTO: JOHN BEATTIE)

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111 MERCURY, 4 March 1884 and 7 March 1884.

112 TASMANIAN MAIL, 17 May 1884, p28.

By 1884, the population of the Peninsula had reached approximately 600,[113] and, while relations between the locals and tourists were not always smooth,[114] by and large the settlers recognised their dependence upon tourism. It is likely that the trade provided many with work or incomes. And after the old Commandant's House was converted into Carnarvon's first hotel in 1886 and visitors began spending several days on the Peninsula, it may be assumed that tourists also provided a reliable outlet for local produce.

Even those who did not profit directly by way of income benefited from the infrastructure which was put in place largely to provide the tourists with amenities. The jetties which were eventually constructed at Carnarvon, Norfolk Bay and Impression Bay were built in response to the demands of tourism. When the new Carnarvon jetty was found to be so short that only half the 850 passengers who travelled by the *Flora* on Boxing Day 1885 could disembark, an extension was approved.[115] The regular sea communications provided by Whitehouse Bros was in response to tourist demand, but the company also won the support of residents by keeping the *Pinafore* running even at a loss.[116] The telephone was also installed and

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113 TASMANIAN MAIL, 28 June 1884, p28.

114 The damage done to trees by an excursionist party in 1878 has already been mentioned. In 1880, another Boxing Day party entered private gardens where they damaged fruit trees and fences (CSD 13/23/257: Caretaker to Colonial Secretary, 29 December 1880). In 1883, vandals smashed three tombstones on Dead Island, and the following year destroyed a fence and an infant's vault. It was believed by Carnarvon's press correspondent that the culprits, if caught, should be flogged once a month for six months 'similar to punishments inflicted on prisoners here, forty years since' (TASMANIAN MAIL, 28 June 1884, p21). In 1885, paddocks, gardens and fruit trees suffered at the hands of another Boxing Day crowd (MERCURY, 27 December 1884). Two years later, the 'quiet' inhabitants of Carnarvon were indignant when denied the use of a government building for a New Year's Eve concert, because visiting 'larrikins upset some of the ornamental stone work on the Penitentiary'. It was further hoped that if the party of pleasure seekers from Hobart who attended the Boxing Day concert the following year ever came again they would 'conduct themselves in a quieter manner' (TASMANIAN MAIL, 7 January 1888, p18). As a *Mercury* columnist wrote in 1885: 'In point of fact Carnarvon folk do not contemplate with unalloyed satisfaction the irruption of excursionists in their quiet domain, for there are unpleasant reminiscences of trespass without leave or licence' (MERCURY, 27 December 1884).

115 In 1887, there were many who cried "I won't come again!" after a particularly messy disembarkation (TASMANIAN MAIL, 8 January, 1887, p11). By the following year, steamers could dock against the newly lengthened jetty.

116 TASMANIAN MAIL, 6 October 1883, p10. The company also provided work for locals by having a new and larger steamer built at Norfolk Bay. This was the *SS Taranna*, which was launched in July 1884 (MACFIE, 1989, *op. cit.*).

roads were built, it was suggested, for the convenience of tourists.[117] Once amenities on the Peninsula were improved, settlement proceeded apace, all the lots offered for sale in 1887 being bought and new houses built.[118]

That tourists were increasingly attracted to the Peninsula and that locals benefited from their presence could not be denied. Yet the vexed question remained: to what extent were natural phenomena the main attractions and, to what extent the old – and to many minds, repugnant – prison buildings? This question was substantially answered in 1889 when for a few weeks the future of the buildings hung in the balance.

2.3.2 The crisis of 1889

In 1889, the dilemma over the Peninsula's relics became of public concern when the liberal Ministry determined to auction off those Port Arthur buildings which it had previously reserved from sale. The government's original intention was to sell the major buildings, the Model Prison and the Penitentiary, on the condition that they be demolished. This intention was made known long before it was enacted, and brought about both a spate of visitors to Port Arthur and a spate of protest. Several letters from both visitors and residents urging the retention of the buildings were published in the *Mercury*. The arguments were various. A visitor felt that the buildings were of prime importance in attracting tourists to the Peninsula:

> I am convinced ... that if the prison is demolished or shut off from inspection, the present annual stream of visitors will be considerably lessened.[119]

A resident stressed the role of visitors in opening up the Peninsula, stating baldy that the old prisons were the 'only features of interest' that the community had.[120] It was further argued that 'Hobart itself depends not a little upon visitors, and is interested in developing all the local attractions, of which Port Arthur is unquestionably the chief'.[121] The government, it was said, was unlikely to make

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117 MERCURY, 9 March 1889; *The Buildings at Port Arthur*; letter from "Resident".

118 TASMANIAN MAIL, 31 December 1887, p20.

119 MERCURY, 1 February 1889; *Sale of Public Buildings at Carnarvon*; letter from "Visitor".

120 MERCURY, 9 March 1889; *The Buildings at Port Arthur*; letter from "Resident".

121 MERCURY, 16 February 1889; *A Plea for Port Arthur*; letter from W Benson, Newtown.

much money from selling the materials retrieved from the buildings, and the foundations and *debris* which would remain after any demolition would be more unsightly than the buildings themselves, and 'would more painfully recall the past'.[122] It was claimed that the Minister had been swayed in his decision by 'the selfish wishes' of two or three Carnarvon residents[123] whose 'whims or self-interest [led] them to agitate for the sale of the buildings'.[124]

Against the suggestion that the buildings brought back painful memories, it was urged that the time of the old prison regime had long since past away, and could now 'be calmly treated like ancient history'. Besides, the buildings were so far off the beaten track that a special excursion had to be made to see them.[125] A Tasmanian living in another colony made the valuable if obvious point that once pulled down, the buildings could not be rebuilt. He was so confident that public opinion in Tasmania favoured the retention of the buildings that he called for a public meeting. He and other writers suggested the granting of 'a small sum' to repair and preserve the buildings.[126]

Undaunted by the letter campaign, the Minister advertised the sales in the *Mercury* of 27 February. The Model Prison was described as consisting of about 100,000 bricks and 27,000 cubic feet of stones, the Penitentiary as consisting of 850,000 bricks, 11,000 cubic feet of stone with 280 doors and windows.[127]

Two days later, a petition signed by over a hundred Carnarvon residents as well as a number of leading citizens of Hobart was handed to the Governor. It reiterated all the arguments contained in the letters, and further claimed that the Model Prison and Penitentiary were the 'main features of interest in Tasmania'.[128] The following week the Minister, Mr Pillinger, consented to receive a deputation of a dozen citizens, mainly from Carnarvon. Mr Cowen, the proprietor of the Carnarvon Hotel (as the old Commandant's House was now called) said that he had accommodated over 300 visitors during the season, all of whom had come for the sole purpose of seeing the prison buildings. Dr Benjafield felt it folly to sell the buildings now, when in a few years' time they would be worth far more. James Backhouse Walker alluded

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122 MERCURY, 1 February 1889.

123 MERCURY, 9 March 1889.

124 MERCURY, 1 February 1889.

125 MERCURY, 16 February 1889.

126 MERCURY, 2 March 1889; *The Port Arthur Buildings*; letter from "Tasmanian".

127 MERCURY, 27 February 1889.

128 MERCURY, 2 March 1889.

to the production of *His Natural Life*, playing night after night at the Theatre Royal, 'without causing anything like ill-feeling in the community'. Mr Lodge stated that wherever relics of the past had been destroyed, universal regret had been expressed. The retention of the buildings, he believed, would help people see how much progress had been made in the colony since convict days. He suggested that a small charge should be levied for inspecting the buildings; that way repair and preservation could be afforded.

Pillinger was unconvinced by any of this. He believed that most people wished the buildings removed. They were already fast becoming ruins and it would cost a large sum of money to put them in good order. Besides:

> The idea of keeping them as a record of the old days was repugnant to his feelings as he considered them monuments of disgrace to the British Government. If there was anything good about them then there might be some reason for preserving them, but when he thought of the cruelty and misery that had been practised and experienced there, he had not the slightest sympathy for those who wished them to remain.[129]

He strongly denied the claim that the buildings were the main features of interest in Tasmania, but he did make the deputation one concession. He had originally intended to impose the condition upon the purchasers of the Model Prison and Penitentiary that they remove the buildings. He had now decided not to make that condition: so anyone purchasing the buildings could convert them into factories or use them for show purposes if they chose to do so.

Pillinger's attitude embodied two important planks of the liberal platform. In the first place, liberal politics sought an "open" rather than a "closed" society; it was therefore important that the past, which symbolised the latter, be played down and emphasis placed upon the progressive present. In the second place, liberals favoured private enterprise over state aid, so it was fitting that Pillinger's compromise position should depend upon the risk of a private speculator. However, the matter was a complex one, even for liberals, and it was noted that the Ministers were not entirely in accord.[130]

The *Mercury* supported the Minister's position, holding that it was 'quite time that the colony was freed from the last vestiges of a system which was got rid of with some trouble'.[131] That the British government was spending money on the repair of historical landmarks, even those in private hands, was no precedent, for 'very few

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129 TASMANIAN MAIL SUPPLEMENT, 9 March 1889.

130 MERCURY, 7 March 1889; *Editorial.*

131 MERCURY, 11 March 1889; *Editorial.*

states would undertake to retain and keep in a condition of preservation ... a huge and ugly penitentiary and a so-called model prison, with all their brutal and degrading associations'.[132] In support of its position, the *Mercury* stated that of the several letters it had received on the subject the majority favoured the removal of the buildings. Curiously, the five it chose to publish strongly favoured their retention.

The auction took place in March 1889. The Model Prison was bought by J B W Woollnough, the recently retired Anglican Chaplain of the Peninsula, for £630, a price criticised as being absurdly low.[133] It was revealed that he intended to convert it into a high class hotel and pleasure resort.[134] The other major government-owned building to be auctioned, the Penitentiary, was offered at a reserve of £800. No offer was made for it and it remained in government hands. Rose Cottage, the parsonage and several private buildings were bid for, but the reserves were not reached, and they were withdrawn from the sale. Four smaller buildings, one in a ruinous state, were sold for prices ranging from £8 to £20, three of them on condition that they be removed within twelve weeks. But overall the sell-off of the Port Arthur buildings had not resulted in the obliteration which many had feared and others had hoped for. The hurdle past, the citizens of Carnarvon could get down to the business of developing the potential of their town as a tourist resort.

2.3.3 Towards commodification

The tourist trade has it that if a tourist attraction is to be successful it must develop the following four features: the Attraction itself, Advertising, Access and Accommodation. These features of Port Arthur were developed in readiness for the new decade.

2.3.3.1 Developing the attraction

In August 1889, Carnarvon with a population of 200 was judged large enough to form a Town Board. The following year, the old Lunatic Asylum, the most significant government-owned building which was not offered for sale, was handed over to the Board for use as a Town Hall.[135]

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132 MERCURY, 7 March 1889; *Editorial.*

133 MERCURY, 13 March 1889 and 17 January 1890.

134 MACFIE, *op. cit.*

135 TASMANIAN MAIL, 1 March 1890, p24.

With the Rev. Woollnough in the chair, the new Board set about developing Carnarvon's assets as a tourist resort. Seats were donated to go under the famous oak trees.[136] Woollnough offered £2 to re-erect two crooked pillars at the bottom of Church Avenue.[137] Briars were cleared away from around the ruined Church.[138] And thanks to a small government grant obtained by Woollnough, Dead Island was cleared of the weeds which were smothering it.[139]

Of the chief buildings, only the ruined Church and Penitentiary were open to the public. At first, the privately-owned Model Prison remained closed, Woollnough refusing to let visitors make even a cursory inspection.[140] But by January 1892, he bowed to pressure, and to their great indignation, a group of visitors learned that they *would* be permitted to enter the Model Prison – but at a charge of one shilling. Moreover, having paid their money and gained entry, the 'displeased and disgusted excursionists ... found the most interesting portion of the building ... locked against them'.[141] Over the next few years, Woollnough continued the conversion of the building. This involved the destruction of one of its most interesting historical features, the chapel, which was gutted to make way for a billiard room.[142] Despite this, Woollnough continued to exploit the building's history by admitting visitors to a portion of it at a charge, twice per week.[143] He further developed his asset by employing an 'old identity to explain the ancient horrors' of the place.[144]

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136 At first it was thought that the donor of these seats was the shipping company, Huddart and Parker. 'Carnarvonites cannot be too grateful to the Victorian firm for their generous gift' (TASMANIAN MAIL SUPPLEMENT, 15 March 1890). The following week, the Carnarvon correspondent of the Tasmanian Mail admitted that a mistake had been made. The seats had been donated by a member of the Town Board (TASMANIAN MAIL, 22 March 1890, p24).

137 TASMANIAN MAIL, 31 May 1890, p17. Unfortunately an earthquake in 1892 made these pillars crooked again (TASMANIAN MAIL 6 February 1892, p23).

138 TASMANIAN MAIL, 13 July 1891, p13.

139 TASMANIAN MAIL, 16 January 1892, p18.

140 'The model prison has passed out of the hands of the Tasmanian Government, and the present owner, a retired parson, is not disposed to allow tourists inside the walls. All sorts of arguments were used to persuade him to allow us to make even the most cursory inspection, but he remained proof against all blandishments.' (BALLARD and LUKE, *op. cit.*, 11.)

141 TASMANIAN MAIL, 16 January 1892.

142 ACKERMAN, J A, 1896; *The World through a Woman's Eyes*; Chicago, 97.

143 ANON, 1894; *Thomas Cook & Sons Railway Official Guide Book to Tasmania - 1894*; Roe Bros, Melbourne, 103.

144 MERCURY, 27 December 1893.

This character was not the first guide to have plied his trade at Port Arthur. The earliest references to a guide dates from 1880, when J E Partington, a British tourist, was shown around the settlement by a former inmate who told him wonderful tales of convict life 'which from constant repetition he no doubt believes'.[145] From 1890, references increase markedly, which suggests that the number of guides might also have increased at this time. In 1892, Beattie's book advised its readers that 'for actual experiences relating to the convict days of Port Arthur, one of its old hands, still alive and residing in the township, can always be engaged, and will act as guide about the Settlement'.[146] At the time, steamers to Port Arthur were met by an old man who claimed to have been 'banished for life' for stealing some candy at a bakery when he had been sent there for bread. Apparently, he had formed such an attachment to the settlement that he could not be tempted to leave it.[147] In 1893, a Boxing Day party was escorted around the buildings by 'an old "identity" in every sense of the word ... [who] explained nearly everything connected with past doings in and about the extraordinary establishment'.[148] This may have been the same character who:

> stated that he had "done" 23 years within the [Penitentiary's] walls, his original sentence being seven years, the remainder having been incurred for breaches of the discipline. [He] described the cells, the daily routine, and the punishment for insubordination, &c. It was amusing to hear the old fellow glibly get rid of his fund of information. "These little squares are to enable *you* to call the attention of the sentry on duty, and if *you* do so without sufficient cause *you* are taken to the yard in the morning and get a 'dozen' (100 lashes) for trifling away the officer's valuable time." He adopted this method of explanation all through, and, really, from his using the second personal pronoun in addressing us, and the gloomy prison we were in, we almost fancied we were living under penal discipline, and infringing its hard and fast rules, and began to cast about us for means of escaping the punishment which he so graphically described as awaiting us.[149]

According to a later writer, ex-convicts returning to Port Arthur at this time also made a small living by manufacturing and selling "convict relics" to visitors. In an unsubstantiated story one man is described as having 'sold at least a dozen of "the

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145 PARTINGTON, J E, 1883; *Random Rot*; Altringham, UK, 161-162, quoted in WEIDENHOFER, M, 1981; *Port Arthur: A Place of Misery*; Melbourne, 125.

146 BEATTIE, *op. cit.*, advertisement for Tasman's Villa boarding house.

147 ACKERMAN, *op. cit.*, 92.

148 MERCURY, 28 December 1892.

149 BALLARD and LUKE, *op. cit.*, 10.

last cat-o'-nine-tails of the convict days" which he had worked on through the winter'.[150]

With Woollnough's decision to exploit the sensational aspect of the Model Prison and with the activities of the convict guides, there was no way in which the attraction of Port Arthur's penal past could be played down. Increasingly, this aspect of the site demanded coverage in the way in which the attraction was advertised.

2.3.3.2 Developing the advertising

It will be recalled that the guide books of the early 1880s went to great pains to avoid mention of Tasmania's convict past. At first their authors were equally reluctant to advertise this aspect of the Tasman Peninsula, although with the passage of time this hard line attitude weakened. Haywood, for instance, in his 1885 guide, *Through Tasmania*, admitted that the district was worth a visit 'on account of its lovely scenery and old associations', but made much of the transformation of the settlement:

> Port Arthur, the once dreaded and most vile spot of the tight little island, has now undergone a considerable change; instead of its being the exile home of prisoners, there are hundreds of honest colonists there now, clearing the bush, ploughing the lands, building up neat little cottages, with a hope that before long they will reap the rewards of their labour.[151]

After recommending visits to the old penal settlements of the Cascades, Impression Bay, Salt Water River and the Coal Mines, Haywood observed: 'Most of the buildings, or dungeons, are falling to decay, so that in course of time, all signs of the past will be gone'. Although he appeared to welcome this, Haywood eventually found that he could not resist mention of the Peninsula's Gothic attractions. For whereas in his first edition, when referring to Eaglehawk Neck and its guard-dogs, he wrote simply: 'the stages on which the dogs were kept are still to be seen, although in a dilapidated condition', in his second edition, he appended the lurid description:

> It was considered ... impossible for a poor prisoner to pass these wretched dogs, irrespective of the chain of sentries with loaded guns, without being torn to pieces. It was here too that the sharks were fed sumptuously every day, so as to keep them in the locality as an additional guard against the escape of the prisoners.[152]

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150 SMITH, *op. cit.*, 68.

151 HAYWOOD, 1885a, *op. cit.*, 66-67.

152 HAYWOOD, 1885b, *op. cit.*, 75. The story of the feeding of the sharks is unsubstantiated, and has been vehemently denied (see particularly

The laborious attempts of Tasmanian Steam Navigation Company's 1886 guide book to avoid mention of the island's penal history have also been noted; yet the company sailed to Port Arthur two or three times every summer and so could not neglect the subject altogether. Somewhat apologetically, it stated:

> Amongst the places of interest easily accessible from Hobart, we should not have omitted to mention Port Arthur, a spot as lovely in its position as it is ugly in its memories.[153]

In 1887 when the Tasmanian company was taken over by Union Steamships, the New Zealand company substantially retained the old guide book, but increased the size of the Port Arthur section by adding:

> The objects of interest here are the old prison, admirably well arranged for purposes of inspection and discipline, but now happily empty; the model prison, also empty, – an exquisitely contrived instrument of mental torture.[154]

Garnett Walch, in his 1889 guide book, admitted that the reading of *His Natural Life* served as a powerful inducement to visit the Peninsula, yet the name "Port Arthur", he felt, was 'better relegated to the limbo of the past'.[155] The contrast between the thriving settler community and past associations appeared to confound him:

> The weed-grown prison yards, the open cells – "sunshine and hope" everywhere where once reigned darkness and despair – the crumbling flower-kissed walls, the sound of children's laughter – all these are fitter accompaniments for bright sky, blue sea, and wooing breezes than the clank of chains, the curses of brutalised, lash-driven, hopeless men, the dismal tolling of the prison bell. Enough. "Let the dead past bury its dead", and turn we to the "living present".[156]

Looked at in another way, though, what Walch achieved with the quoted paragraph was a means of stating the exact nature of the convict attraction, albeit dressed in the socially acceptable rhetoric of denial. No such compromise was found necessary by Button, however. In both his 1889 anonymous work and the 1892 volume for which he claimed authorship, he devoted two full and detailed pages to the prison buildings and their former use.[157]

SMITH, *op. cit.*, 48). It later made regular appearances in the touristic literature, and, whatever its veracity, has become firmly established in the folklore of Tasman Peninsula.

153 TASMANIAN STEAM NAVIGATION COMPANY, *op. cit.*, 74.

154 UNION STEAMSHIP COMPANY, 1887; *Guide for Visitors to Tasmania 1887-8*; Mercury, Hobart, 64.

155 WALCH, *op. cit.*, 91.

156 *Ibid.*, 92.

157 ANON, 1889, *op. cit.*, 22-23 and BUTTON, *op. cit.*, 174-176.

Other forms of advertising Port Arthur were employed. From 1889, a collection of photographs of Port Arthur, both contemporary and dating from the convict period, were offered for sale by Anson Bros. These were available in any size, singly or in book form.[158] Many of them would have been taken by Beattie. Three years later, Beattie himself brought out the first edition of his *Port Arthur, Van Diemen's Land*. Even Tasmania's conservative press bowed to the pressure to publicise Port Arthur, the *Tasmanian Mail* running a series of articles on the settlement from 16 March until 23 May 1889. With the attraction developed and well advertised, it was only necessary to make it easier for tourists to get to Carnarvon, and to provide for them once they were there.

2.3.3.3 Developing accommodation and access

At the start of the 1890s, the Carnarvon Hotel was joined by two boarding houses, and many of the locals leased their houses to tourists. Over the summer of 1887/8 almost every available house was let for one to two months.[159] Transport was also upgraded. Whitehouse brothers replaced the *Taranna* with a larger steamer, the *Nubeena*, in December 1890, and Sam Wellard introduced a 4-horse carriage service between Taranna and Carnarvon.[160] Roads throughout the Peninsula were upgraded, and a new road from Carnarvon to Wedge Bay was commenced. The completion of this project was eagerly looked forward to since it was assumed that the new route so opened up would reduce travel time to Hobart from eight hours to three and a half.[161]

Another means of access to Port Arthur was provided by the Easter tours of Tasmania's penal settlements which were initiated by the Union Steamship line in 1891. The vessel cast off from Melbourne on the Thursday before Easter and ran down to Maria Island, reaching it on Good Friday evening. The passengers disembarked the following morning, spent a few hours inspecting the settlement, then steamed down to Port Arthur which was reached on Saturday afternoon. An evening inspection of the ruins was followed by a dance in the Penitentiary. On Easter Sunday, the vessel steamed to Hobart, where the passengers passed the following day. The voyage back to Melbourne lasted from Monday evening until noon on Wednesday.[162]

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158 MERCURY, 16 February 1889.

159 TASMANIAN MAIL, 31 December 1887, p20.

160 TASMANIAN MAIL, 3 January 1891, p24.

161 TASMANIAN MAIL, 13 July 1891, p13.

162 The 1893 tour is described in detail in BALLARD and LUKE, *op. cit.*

At the start of the 1890s, tourism to Port Arthur looked set to boom. Yet despite the innovations and the growing interest in Port Arthur, the town was not immune to the general effects of the depression which was tightening its grip upon all the Australian colonies. In late April 1891, despite the rapidly approaching winter season, visitors were still patronising the settlement, 'every coach bringing a number to view its ancient ruins'.[163] But by the end of the following summer, it was observed that the road traffic from Taranna to Carnarvon was considerably down on the previous year. It was even thought at this time that tourist numbers seemed 'to be going backwards every year'.[164] Nevertheless, Port Arthur had been substantially commodified. With a revival in the economy, its future as a tourist town seemed assured.

While Port Arthur was by far Tasmania's best known and most visited convict site, there is evidence of interest in other lesser sites, although for a variety of reasons it was to be many years before these were substantially commodified.

2.4 SECONDARY CONVICT SITES

2.4.1 Settlement Island: 'hell on earth'

The horrors of the secondary penal settlement in Macquarie Harbour were well known by the 1880s. Charles Dilke's book, *Greater Britain* (published in 1868), for example, contained the following passage:

> Seventy miles north-west of Hobarton is a sheet of water called Macquarie Harbour, the deeds wrought upon the shores of which are not to be forgotten in a decade. In 1823, there were 228 prisoners at Macquarie Harbour, to whom, in the year, 229 floggings and 9,925 lashes were ordered, 9,100 lashes being actually inflicted. The cat was, by order of the authorities, soaked in salt water and dried in the sun before being used. There was at Macquarie Harbour one convict overseer who took a delight in seeing his companions punished. A day seldom passed without five or six being flogged on his reports. The convicts were at his mercy. In a space of five years, during which the prisoners at Macquarie Harbour averaged 250 in number, there were 835 floggings and 32,723 lashes administered. In the same five years, 112 convicts absconded from this settlement, of whom ten were killed and eaten by their companions, seventy-five perished in the bush with or without cannibalism, two were captured with portions of human flesh in their possession, and died in hospital, two were shot, sixteen were hanged for murder and cannibalism, and seven are reported to have made good their escape, though this is by no means certain.... The most fearful thought, when we

163 TASMANIAN MAIL, 25 April 1891, p11.

164 TASMANIAN MAIL, 2 April 1892, p27.

> hear about these Tasmanian horrors, is that probably many of those subjected to them were originally guiltless. If only one in a thousand was an innocent man, four human beings were consigned each year to hell on earth.[165]

Sarah Island penal station was abandoned in 1833. Nearly a decade later, when Sir John and Lady Jane Franklin, accompanied by a large party of convicts, guides and hangers-on, made their celebrated overland journey to the west coast, they found the settlement still in reasonable condition.[166] Between 1846 and 1847 an attempt was made to use the island as a base for the extraction of Huon pine, but the enterprise was abandoned as an economic disaster.[167] Forty years later, R C Kermode made an overland trip from Mt Bischoff to Strahan (which he described as the most miserable spot he had ever been in), and from there his party of eight sailed out to Settlement Island. Kermode found it 'an interesting spot, as on it [were] the ruins of the old courthouse, built of stones; also, of the officers' and prisoners' quarters'.[168] A few years later, little but the courthouse ruins remained.

Stories about the depletion of the original settlement are various. The anonymously written *Guide Book for Visitors Etc.* of 1889 claimed that it had been destroyed by fire.[169] A decade later, the *Zeehan and Dundas Herald* stated that:

> When the Heemskirk rush set in, or thereabouts, vessels ran to Settlement Island for the purpose of getting bricks and building materials. The old places were ruthlessly broken down, and it was not until the Government got wind of this bit of freebooting that it was stopped. However, this veto came too late, and besides the court-house there remained only the walls of a few cells... [170]

More recently, Richard Flanagan, a historian of the west coast, has come forward with a radically different theory gleaned from local folklore. This attributes the destruction of the buildings to an act of sabotage by the district's Huon piners:

> [S]o appalled were many with the continued existence of the former hell that in the 1890s some rowed across the harbour and blew all the buildings up. It was not that the men were ashamed of

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165 DILKE, *op. cit.*, 98-99.

166 FLANAGAN, R, 1985; *A Terrible Beauty: History of the Gordon River Country*; Greenhouse, Richmond, Victoria, 50.

167 BRAND, I, 1990; *Sarah Island: An Account of the Penal Settlements of Sarah Island, Tasmania, from 1822 to 1833 and 1846 to 1847*; Regal, Launceston, 74-77.

168 TASMANIAN MAIL, 4 April 1885, p10.

169 ANON, 1889, *op. cit.*, 121.

170 ZEEHAN AND DUNDAS HERALD, 18 January 1898.

> their convict past, but simply that they saw no point in allowing such a testament to sorrow ... to continue to exist.[171]

By the late 1880s, the port of Strahan had grown considerably, and, whether or not the district's Huon piners approved, the eighty-acre Settlement Island gradually came to serve its population in a way similar to the way in which Port Arthur served the people of Hobart: it provided an opportunity, for those who found such things of interest, to explore the old ruins in the context of a mass holiday excursion. In September 1888, it is recorded that a party of 45 locals, women and men, explored the ruins until bad weather forced them to leave. They then sailed to Dead Man's Island where they found the Huon pine head boards in a state of perfect preservation.[172] Thereafter, parties of locals frequently steamed across to the island to picnic. By steamship, the voyage from Strahan took only one hour.

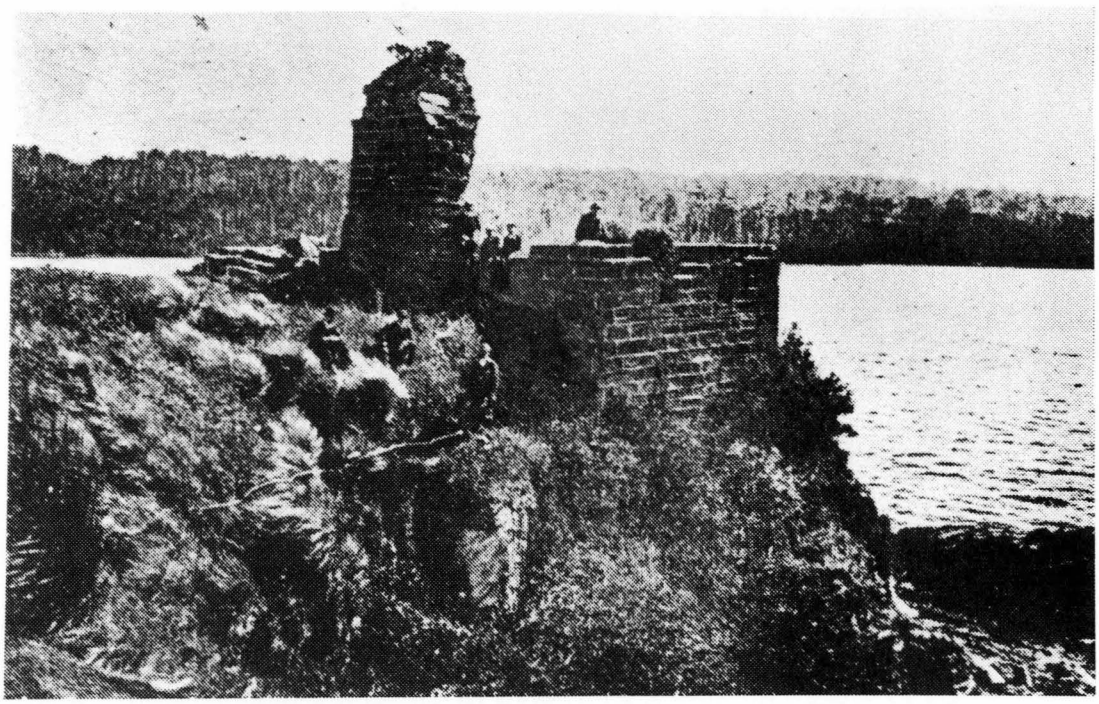

FIGURE 2.9

THE COURT HOUSE, SETTLEMENT ISLAND

By 1889 steam launches could be hired to convey tourists to the island in comfort,[173] and as tourism to the west coast developed in the last few years of the decade, so Settlement Island began to feature in promotional literature. Walch's 1889 guide cites the existence of the remains of the old convict buildings, but reassures the intending tourist that 'there is nothing else to remind the spectator of

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171 FLANAGAN, 1985, *op. cit.*, 74.

172 TASMANIAN MAIL, 1 September 1888, p24 and 8 September 1888, p11.

173 ANON, 1889, *op. cit.*, 117.

those episodes of man's inhumanity to man, so vividly portrayed by Marcus Clarke in *His Natural Life*'.[174] Button's *Picturesque Tasmania* describes a night spent on the island in the early 1890s by a launch party. After mooring the boat the party pitched tents and explored the ruins. Then they sat around a roaring fire and did as they believed 'every visitor to the island for the past twenty years [had] done'. That is:

> they] produce[d] a copy of Marcus Clarke's story, *His Natural Life*, and read passages from it, trying to conjure up, before [their] mind's eye, the horrors of the past, when the place was peopled with desperate criminals and their brutal gaolers, and the swish of the lash was an all too frequent sound.[175]

Not until after 'the past of the place had been amply discussed' did they sleep. The following morning, the launch took them to visit Grummet Island, where prisoners were sentenced to solitary confinement, and to Condemned Island, where those sentenced to death spent their last night on Earth chained to a ring bolt.

In the case of Settlement Island, there could be no pretence that the visitors were attracted to the place by virtue of its scenery or climate. Apart from the ruins, there was little to see. The ground was covered with exotic weeds. There was no fresh water. Even the weather was often vile. But the ruins intrigued.[176] Visitors to them would speculate about their past uses, and myths would be woven around them. One member of a New Year's Day party of 100 which visited the island in 1892 was heard to describe the use of a small cell containing a fireplace. 'This room', he maintained, 'was used as a roasting room for unruly prisoners ... [who] were put in the room and a large fire lighted, and ... they were kept there for a certain time as punishment'.[177]

At the start of the 1890s, trips to Settlement Island became more frequent. It was predicted during 1890 that over the summer there would be many excursions to Settlement Island, and even in winter visitors to the area made up the bulk of the passengers on at least one trip.[178]

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174 WALCH, *op. cit.*, 47.

175 BUTTON, *op. cit.*, 157. This guide is undated, but Button and party took the train from Strahan to Zeehan. Since this line did not open until 1892, the book must have been published some time after this date.

176 'Very little can be written about the island, which is overgrown with raspberry canes, mint, and certainly not attractive, and, but for its past romantic history, offers little temptation to sight-seers.' (TASMANIAN MAIL, 13 January 1894, p13.)

177 TASMANIAN MAIL, 16 January 1892, p18.

178 TASMANIAN MAIL, 9 August 1890 and 11 October 1890.

By 1892, the mining industry on the west coast had been hit by the depression, partly as a consequence of the collapse of the Bank of Van Diemen's Land the previous year. Hundreds of young men were thrown out of work,[179] and Strahan was beginning to regard tourism as a necessary component of its economic future, arguing that to see and do everything a visitor should really stay a few days.[180] Already the town possessed four hotels, and, with the opening of the railway line to Zeehan on 16 February, its citizens could boast that it was 'becoming more and more a pleasure resort for the people of Zeehan and Dundas'.[181] Since Zeehan had replaced Beaconsfield in 1891 as Tasmanian's third largest town and in 1893 was thought to be one third the size of Hobart,[182] this represented no small market to tap.

2.4.2 Maria Island: recycled ruins

Maria Island, about twenty five kilometres in length, lies some fifteen kilometres off Triabunna on the east coast of Tasmania. It was used as a secondary penal station between 1825 and 1833, when it was abandoned and let for grazing purposes, the convicts housed there having been transferred to Port Arthur. In the late 1840s, the island was used as a probation station. Thereafter it was again leased as a sheep and cattle run, and the prison buildings, mainly situated at Darlington in the north of the island, fell into ruins like their counterparts elsewhere.[183]

References exist from 1883 to the holding of Easter picnics on the island,[184] and Louisa Anne Meredith mentioned in her 1871 guide book that steamers occasionally sailed there. Access was difficult, however. Triabunna was some seventy kilometres by rough road from Hobart, and the long alternative journey entirely by sea ran through the potentially rough waters around Cape Pillar. It is likely that in the first half of the 1880s most picnickers on the island lived on the east coast.

In April 1884 Maria Island entered a new phase of its history. It was leased to a wealthy Italian migrant, Signor Diego Bernacchi, who intended to use it for viticulture and silk production. Bernacchi floated a company in 1887. His ambitions

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179 TASMANIAN MAIL, 20 February 1892, 27.

180 ZEEHAN AND DUNDAS HERALD, 12 April 1892

181 ZEEHAN AND DUNDAS HERALD, 16 March 1892 and 12 April 1892.

182 ROBSON, 1991, *op. cit.*, 93 & 193.

183 TASMANIAN MAIL, 23 August 1884. 'Buildings are all in ruins, fences gone to wreck....'

184 TASMANIAN MAIL, 31 March 1883, p9.

were wide. He intended to establish a town peopled with skilled migrants from Italy and Switzerland. Cement production, fishing and farming were added to his original plans for the island. By 1888, the population of Darlington had grown to 250. Its name had also been changed, in line with the other former penal settlements. Bernacchi rechristened it San Diego.

The Italian entrepreneur also realised Maria Island's potential as a holiday resort. It possessed an excellent climate, scenic beauty and fine fishing. By 1888, Bernacchi had built a hotel and restaurant in San Diego, using the walls of the old penitentiary as the foundations of the latter.[185] Visitors now travelled to the island more frequently, and it began to feature in the tourist literature. Scant reference was made to its convict history, however. Above all, its past was romanticised.[186]

Maria Island was named by the early Dutch Navigator, Abel Tasman, in 1642, and almost all the early tourist guides tell how the name he bestowed upon it was that of his betrothed, the daughter of his patron, the Governor-General of the Dutch East Indies, Anthony Van Diemen. One journalist found in Maria Van Diemen's decision to change her name to Maria Tasman an apt foreshadowing of the name change of the colony itself.[187] Unfortunately for those of a romantic bent of mind, the story has no foundation in truth; the thirty-nine year old Tasman, married in 1642 to his second wife, named Maria Island not after his patron's daughter, but – sycophantically – after his wife.

The other common romanticisation of Maria Island involved its use in 1849 as a place of exile for the Young Irelander leader, Smith O'Brien. In fact, several tourist guide books which make no mention of the island's use either as a secondary penal station or as a probation station refer to O'Brien's stay there.[188]

O'Brien was aristocratic and patriotic. He and six other Young Irelanders were exiled to Van Diemen's Land following the unsuccessful uprising of 1848. Their stories, involving disguises, secret meetings and daring escapes, were the very stuff

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185 TASMANIAN MAIL, 20 October 1888, p11.

186 An advertisement for the new hotel promoted the island with the words: 'Romantic, Scenery, Fishing, Shooting, Etc.' "History" was not mentioned (MERCURY, 20 December 1888).

187 TASMANIAN MAIL, 23 August 1884, p27.

188 For example: TASMANIAN STEAM NAVIGATION COMPANY, *op. cit.*, 68, and WALCH, *op. cit.*, 90. The cottages in which O'Brien was confined both on Maria Island and at Port Arthur were visited and noted by tourists. Ballard was one of several writers inspired to give an account of the Irish prisoner's turbulent career following a visit to Smith O'Brien's cottage at Port Arthur (BALLARD and LUKE, *op. cit.*, 12).

of romance. Their call for a free Ireland was also supported by many influential Tasmanians. James Fenton, a free Irish settler, for example, accorded them a chapter to themselves in his *A History of Tasmania*, published in 1884. Moreover, the Young Irelanders were political prisoners, not run-of-the-mill convicts, and their stories could be told without risk of offending the sensibilities of those who wished to deny the penal past.

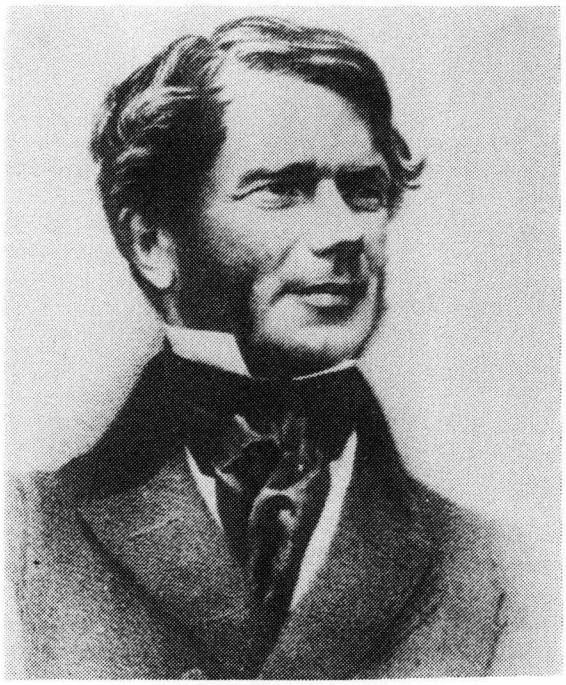

FIGURE 2.10

SMITH O'BRIEN

But Maria Island did have a broader penal past, although this was not publicised to anything like the degree that was the case with Macquarie Harbour or Port Arthur. Indeed, there was no reason why it should have been. Settlement Island catered for the large west coast population and for the tourists who were energetically being wooed to the region, while Port Arthur was a playground for the people of Hobart and for the tourists who were based there. Maria Island, by contrast, had no large local hinterland, the once bustling town of Triabunna having shrunk to 'veritably a deserted village'.[189] Moreover, by the early 1890s Bernacchi had barely begun to develop the island's touristic potential. It is possible that in time he would have exploited the convict past in order to lure tourists to his resort, but in 1892 his company failed and he left the colony.

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189 BALLARD and LUKE, *op. cit.*, 7.

The sole reference to exploitation of or interest in Maria Island's penal past in the early 1890s is to be found in Ballard and Luke's 1893 account of the Easter voyage of the *Manapouri*, which allowed its 240 passengers a few hours on the island on the way from Melbourne to Port Arthur.[190] The convict buildings which remained were described as being 'in a ruinous condition' with the houses of the St Diego residents clustered around them. No one from the government appeared to be in charge; and, on requesting a guide, the tourists were provided with the services of – not an old "identity" – but a Chinaman, who, not caring for the overt racism of the visitors, dismissed them as 'a d--d lot of lallikins'. Ballard showed an interest in the grave of a Maori chief on the island, but, in the absence of any form of interpretation, could not discover how it came to be there. The visit to the island appears to have taken the form of a little more than a brief aimless wander.[191]

Following the collapse of Bernacchi's company, the population of Maria Island dwindled; visits from the Union Steamships tours also appear to have been discontinued at about this time, and it was to be some years before the island regained its popularity as a tourist resort.

2.4.3 Meagher's cottage, Lake Sorell: romantic ruins

The opening up of the route to Lake Sorell gave access to a minor convict site mentioned in several tourist guide books. This was the ruin of the cottage built and lived in by Thomas Meagher (or O'Meagher), another of the seven Young Irelanders exiled to Van Diemen's Land. Described as 'the place in which the Irish patriot expiated the sin of loving his country and his manhood fearlessly and well by years of lonely exile',[192] the cottage was built on Dog's Head Promontory in 1850 and occupied by "Meagher-of-the-Sword" for less than two years before he made his escape to America. It was described by Stoney in 1856, four years after it had been abandoned, as 'a pretty cottage'.[193] But by the 1890s little remained of it but the chimney, the walls having been pulled down to provide material for a shepherd's

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190 See page 81 above for further information on this 'tour of the penal settlements'.

191 BALLARD and LUKE, *op. cit.*, 5-7.

192 BUTTON, *op. cit.*, 28.

193 STONEY, *op. cit.*, 191.

hut.[194] Even so, it was recorded as late as 1937 that 'many a launch journey is taken over beautiful Lake Sorell ... to view the site of the exile O'Meagher's cottage'.[195]

2.4.4 The George III Memorial: 'a disgraceful state of repair'

In April 1835, the convict transport ship, *George III*, sunk off Southport, about 140 kilometres south of Hobart, and 139 out of 220 male prisoners were lost. There were accusations that soldiers, fearing a mass break out, fired upon the convicts and kept them below decks. At the subsequent enquiry the crew explained that they had deemed it necessary to keep the convicts locked away until the long boats could be placed in the water, but that the ship went down in ten minutes, trapping many. Governor Arthur, although refusing to assign blame, implied that more could have been done for the convicts, and, as a mark of respect, caused a memorial to be built on the headland overlooking the wreck site. This tomb-like sandstone structure bore in carved letters the names of those who perished.

In the early 1880s, when steamer excursions from Hobart were at the height of their popularity, trips to Southport, principally a timber area, were occasionally offered. On Boxing Day 1881, a pleasure excursion attracted 500 at 5/- per head. However, only one or two had stamina and perseverance enough to reach the monument which they found 'in a disgraceful state of disrepair, little else than a heap of stones remaining'.[196] The track to the monument had also been allowed to deteriorate, until it consisted in 1885 of 'quagmires and treacherous footholds'.[197]

Yet by that year steamers left Hobart for Southport twice a week, and tourists were encouraged to visit the area on account of its scenery and fishing. It is difficult to know whether or not the monument itself proved much of an attraction. But whether it did or not, it was certainly the case that the fate of the *George III* was appropriated by those who sought to sensationalise the past. Whatever the truth about the circumstances of the wreck, it was for many years common currency that the soldiers fired on the prisoners as they swam for the shore.[198] Although the George III Memorial had only slight significance as an actual tourist site, the history

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194 BARRETT, C, 1944; *Isle of Mountains*; Cassell & Co, London, 24.

195 PARKER, C, 1937; *Tasmania: the Jewel of the Commonwealth*; Hobart, 24.

196 MERCURY, 28 December 1881.

197 TASMANIAN MAIL, 11 April 1885, p26.

198 SMITH, *op. cit.*, 38. Smith denies that the soldiers behaved this way, but does not cite his sources.

which gave rise to it certainly contributed to the body of anecdote which helped keep the penal past alive as a source of intrigue and controversy for tourists and Tasmanians alike.

2.5 NON-CONVICT HISTORICAL TOURIST SITES

Tasmanian historical sites which could be interpreted without reference to the convict past were not promoted energetically until after World War I. Nevertheless, during the early 1890s certain "non-convict" sites began to find their way onto tourist itineraries.[199] It is these sites which will be considered in this section.

2.5.1 Risdon Cove: the 'missing first chapter'

On 8 and 11 September 1803, the two vessels which comprised the British invasion fleet dropped anchor off Risdon Cove in the Derwent River. They held forty-nine people, twenty four of whom were convicts. The commandant of the small group was the twenty-three year old Junior Lieutenant John Bowen. His task was to found a colony. The site he and his party occupied was to be its capital and was called Hobart

By early August 1804, Bowen had been relieved of his command and was on his way back to Sydney. The site of Hobart had also been moved nearly ten kilometres down river to the site of present day Sullivan's Cove. The settlers in the original party left Risdon, and the new Lieutenant Governor, David Collins, decided to leave only a few convict mechanics and sawyers behind. In September, Collins gave orders that all the houses at Risdon be pulled down, although at least two remained.[200] Two years later, 1,000 acres of the area were granted as farms. Over the next few decades, this land changed hands several times, and other houses were built on land which had been part of the original settlement. Most notable of these

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199 During the penal period, convictism permeated every aspect of life in Van Diemen's Land. Consequently, it is strictly speaking inaccurate to describe any site as "non-convict". If a site is associated with an event, it is likely that convicts would have been linked with it somehow. If a site is notable as a building, it is likely that convicts would have been involved in its construction or maintenance. If a site is associated with a famous person, it is almost inevitable that he (and in this instance the pronoun is used advisedly) would have had a place in the hierarchy of convict administration.

200 GLOVER, M, 1978; *History of the Site of Bowen's Settlement Risdon Cove;* Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service, Occasional Paper No 2, 23.

was *Restdown*, erected between 1812 and 1813 by Andrew Geils, who was at the time Commandant of the colony. In 1829, this house was purchased by Thomas Gregson, later to become Premier of Tasmania. In 1873, one of Gregson's visitors described what was left of Bowen's settlement, namely:

> three walls of a fair-sized building, still called the "guard-house", and the stone chimney of another residence; they are both of mixed rubble, stone and bricks. The approach to these ruins ... and the interior of the roofless guard-house ... [is] choked with briars.... [201]

While sketchy accounts of Bowen's settlement were provided in the early tourist guides as part of their "Epitomes of History", it was not until 1886 that a guide book suggested a visit to the site. Attention was drawn to the old chimney which was still standing and 'said to be the first piece of brickwork ever constructed in Tasmania'.[202] In the same year, a tourist described how she took a 'very antiquated punt' across the Derwent to Risdon, where she saw an 'old building fallen very much into decay, which was evidently a large store of some kind'. Her party was 'quite sorry to turn away from the picturesque old place with its remembrance of old days'.[203]

A detailed historical examination of the Risdon settlement was not carried out until 1889, when this work was made possible because of the papers uncovered in England by James Bonwick.[204] J B Walker, the historian who carried out the work, contended that previous Tasmanian historians, including West and Fenton, gave 'meagre, inaccurate and contradictory accounts' of the first settlement. He promised to tell the story for the first time of 'this missing first chapter of [Tasmania's] history'.[205] However, even Walker had difficulty in coming to terms with what is generally regarded as the most significant event of that brief chapter: the confrontation which occurred at the settlement on 3 May 1804 between several soldiers and a large group of Aborigines.[206]

It is difficult to know to what extent the neglect of the Risdon site was due to a reluctance on the behalf of Tasmanians to admit to the occurrence of this tragic event. But since a similar level of neglect was experienced by other sites of

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201 Royal Society of Tasmania Archives, Hurst Papers, Vol. 10, p104. Quoted in GLOVER, *op. cit.*, 28-29.

202 TASMANIAN STEAM NAVIGATION COMPANY, *op. cit.*, 17.

203 TASMANIAN MAIL, 2 October 1886, p7.

204 See page 61 above.

205 TASMANIAN MAIL, 26 October 1889, p5.

206 That event and the interpretations put upon it are considered on page 98 below.

comparable historic significance, it is likely that Risdon was ignored simply because at the time Tasmanians in general didn't consider their history important enough to commemorate. This contention is supported by the fact that for many years the first northern settlement, York Town, was similarly neglected.

2.5.2 York Town: 'desolation and ruins'

On 5 November 1804, a second British fleet arrived in Tasmania at Port Dalrymple in the north of the island, the site of present day George Town. The invasion party consisted of 181 men and women, 74 of whom were convicts. They were under the charge of Lieutenant-Colonel William Paterson who had been appointed Lieutenant-Governor of the northern half of the island. Three weeks after arrival, Paterson became dissatisfied with the site and moved his party across the River Tamar to its western shore. A settlement was established there and named York Town. Further exploration, however, revealed better land further south, and during 1806 the settlers moved again, then again the following year to the present site of the City of Launceston.

The abandoned site of York Town rapidly fell into ruins. Mentions of visits to it by tourists only occur after the establishment of the gold mines at Beaconsfield, ten kilometres to its south. In the early 1890s, a party of tourists to the mine had neglected to obtain in Launceston the pass necessary to go down the shaft. Instead, in what was clearly a much less preferable option, they drove up to the York Town site, which they found marked only by 'desolation and ruins'.[207] A similar level of neglect was accorded to the only other non-convict historical site to which tourists were directed in the 1880s, the Lady Franklin Museum.

2.5.3 The Lady Franklin Museum: 'a bright page in history'

That the Lady Franklin Museum was in a dilapidated condition by 1870 has already been remarked.[208] The man who brought this fact to note was S H Wintle, the geologist who so passionately opposed the writing of *His Natural Life*, and even more passionately opposed publication of the sources upon which Clarke claimed it was based.[209] Wintle wanted the few aspects of Tasmania's past which he believed

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207 BUTTON, *op. cit.*, 28.

208 See page 12 above.

209 See pages 25-26 above.

transcended the general gloom to receive due recognition. Among these were the aspirations of Lady Jane Franklin, which Wintle felt were symbolised by the museum she founded. On its behalf he made what is possibly the first appeal for the preservation of a historical monument to have been made in Tasmania:

> [S]hould not the first temple of science in this colony ... be preserved by the State from the desolating hand of time, as a fitting memorial of one who forms a bright page in the history of our beautiful colony.[210]

Wintle concluded his article with 'a fervent wish that the secluded forest-temple might be protected from further ravages of time, and henceforth be regarded as a valuable archive of Tasmania's history'.

Although some distance from Hobart and scarcely accorded mention in nineteenth century guide books, the museum was, Wintle believed, known to many Tasmanians. It was also occasionally visited by tourists. Among these was a young Victorian woman who drove out to it in 1886. Unaware of its significance, she could only describe what she saw: 'a curiously ugly building ... [which] except for its ugliness ... is something like the pictures of Greek temples in its architecture'.[211]

It is true that when compared with its European counterparts, indeed when compared with Hobart's public buildings of the 1850s, the Lady Franklin Museum fails to impress. As Wintle understood, arguments for its preservation were more cogent if based upon grounds of cultural significance rather than aesthetics. Even so, in the pragmatic 1880s, they were no more likely to loosen purse strings.

2.6 'THE LOST TASMANIAN RACE'

There was an aspect of the past other than the penal past which Tasmanians were keen to play down. This was the dark past of the race war between the colonists and the island's original occupants. In Britain during the 1830s, stories of 'aggression and horrid cruelties on the part of the English [occupiers'] abounded.[212]

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210 WINTLE, S, 1870; Lady Franklin's Museum, in THOMAS, 1870, *op. cit.*, 178-180.

211 TASMANIAN MAIL, 2 October 1886, p7.

212 NAPIER, J, 1835; *Colonisation*; London, 94. Quoted in REYNOLDS, H, 1988; The Black War: Tasmania's First Lands Rights Movement, *Island* **34/35** (Autumn), 104-107.

It was even stated that with the Tasmanian Aboriginal experience, an 'indelible stain had been thrown upon the British Government'.[213]

Although the Black War was long over by independence (indeed only 16 tribal Aborigines survived in captivity in 1856),[214] stories of atrocities continued to be broadcast. Dilke, for example, wrote in 1868 that the 'frightful massacres' of the Aborigines demanded a judgement. They showed him that 'whatever the polish of manner and of minds in the old country, in outlying portions of the empire there is no lack of the old savagery of our race'.[215] A similar view was held by R Hill, a British traveller who spent eight days in Tasmania in 1875. In *What We Saw in Australia,* she supplied evidence to support her claim that 'our dealings with the aborigines of Tasmania are a blot on the national character'.[216]

Even the French reading public were treated to reports of the inhumanities practised by Tasmanians. E Michel spent some time in the Australian colonies in 1882, and six years later published an account of his travels in *A Travers l'Hemisphere Sud.* Michel was appalled by the fate of the Tasmanian Aborigines, and ridiculed the colonists' inept war efforts.[217]

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213 COLONIST (India), 17 October 1838. Also quoted in REYNOLDS, 1988, *op. cit.*.

214 STONEY, *op. cit.*, 95.

215 DILKE, *op. cit.*, 96.

216 HILL, *op. cit.*, 416.

217 In particular, Michel ridiculed the campaign known as the Black Line. This, Governor Arthur's attempted final solution to the Aboriginal problem, was put into effect in October 1830. In theory, a line of some 3,000 soldiers, free settlers and convict servants was to move down the island driving the Aborigines before it until they were trapped in the Forestier Peninsula, an uninhabited land mass connected by narrow necks to Tasman Peninsula to the south and the main island of Tasmania to the north. Arthur believed that small garrisons stationed at each neck could contain the Aboriginal population indefinitely. In practice, the Black Line captured only one man and a boy. In terms of what it set out to achieve the campaign was a monumental failure, and cost some £30,000. Understandably, it was a subject about which most Tasmanians tended for many years to be highly sensitive. Michel's uninhibited account included the following: '3,000 blancs partirent en campaigne et étaient arrivés a cerner les noir, lorsqu'un individu se mit a crier: Viola, voila du bruit dans ce buisson, feu! feu! On se ressamble, on fait feu, et on s'aperçoit qu'on a tué une pauvre vache qui passait paissiblement.' (MICHEL, E, 1888; *A Travers L'Hemisphere Sud, Ou Mon Second Voyage Autour du Monde;* Librairie Victor Palme, Paris, 371.) This anecdote's most significant claim, of course, is not that the inept Tasmanian gunmen shot a peaceful cow, but that they were prepared apparently to let off a fusillade as soon as someone claimed to hear a noise.

Even in the other Australian colonies, where atrocities committed against Aborigines were far from unknown, the genocide in Tasmania was remarked upon. Nor was it always fairly reported. Marcus Clarke, for example, in an 1873 article for the Melbourne *Argus*, described how the colonists drove all the Aborigines into the Tasman Peninsula, where they 'slaughtered them at their leisure'.[218]

Tasmania's "Black War" was clearly a touchy subject, but also one which would excite the visitors' curiosity. How then were the tourist guide books to respond? The early guides either ignored the subject altogether or else accorded it only passing comment as a thing of mild curiosity value. The Tasmanian author, Louisa Anne Meredith, chose the former course in her 1871 guide, as did J Coutts in his 1880 publication, *Vacation Tours in New Zealand and Tasmania*. And Just, in *Tasmaniana!* (1879), contented himself with the following:

> One very important undertaking was the Black War, the circumstances of which are well known to students of Tasmanian history.[219]

Thomas' guides of 1869 and 1870 stated matter of factly that 'only one pure aboriginal specimen survives, and her name is Lallah Rookh'.[220] By 1873, for no clear reason, Thomas allowed "Lalla Rookh" to be referred to by her tribal name of Truganini. But by his next edition, published in 1879, the name no longer mattered. Truganini had died in 1876, and Thomas could say simply, 'there are ... no black natives'.[221]

Silence, however, could not be a long term solution to the problems posed by the visitors' curiosity. The question: What happened to Tasmania's Aborigines?, even if not directly asked, was certainly implied. It demanded an answer, and one which would exonerate the colonists from blame. The problem was how to explain away the demise of a people, estimated before the European invasion to number 7,000. The tourist guide books tackled the question in a variety of ways.

The first simple expedient was justification. This was time-honoured. During the days of the Black War, 'constant references [were made] to the supposed inherent

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218 ARGUS (Melbourne), 3 July 1873.

219 JUST, *op. cit.*, 10.

220 THOMAS, 1869, *op. cit.*, 19 and THOMAS, 1870, *op. cit.*, 42. "Lallah Rookh" was the somewhat preposterous name bequeathed to Truganini by G A Robinson, who named in equally bizarre fashion all the Aborigines in his care on Flinders Island.

221 THOMAS, 1879, *op. cit.*, xi.

savagery of the Natives' as a justification of White brutality.[222] Thomas' 1873 guide used this approach:

> the Anglo-Saxon spirit of the pioneers kept them up ... and although there were hordes of black savages to the number of 7000 roaming over the fertile plains of the colony ... the indomitable pluck of the settlers led them to scatter.[223]

But by the 1870s, this form of jingoism was not universally well received; literate visitors were well aware of the brutality of the Whites. Therefore, new ploys had to be used, and several of these found their way into the island's tourism and travel literature. The most common of these was diversion, the casting of blame for all atrocities on the colony's lower classes. It was said that the convicts transported in the early days were:

> brutes of the lowest sort, who soon availed themselves of their opportunities to maltreat the ignorant savages of the bush, to shoot the men, to steal their women, and even to ill-use their children. One villain exhibited in Hobart the ears he had cut from a living boy; and another used as a tobacco-stopper a dried finger forcibly removed from an aboriginal man.[224]

Then, in order to stress the moral rectitude of the establishment, it was claimed that 'these fiends were punished'. However, with the exception of a number of European men who in 1824 were given twenty-five lashes after being convicted of 'indescribable brutality' towards some Aboriginal women, no White was ever punished for the murder, rape or kidnapping of a Native.[225] Furthermore, as Sally Morgan has advised: 'We should be wary of [the settlers'] testimony, which was coloured by a desire to exonerate themselves'.[226] Understandably, the handful of direct beneficiaries of Aboriginal dispossession were only too keen to point the finger of blame elsewhere for the demise of the original land owners.

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222 MORGAN, S, 1992; *Land Settlement in Early Tasmania*; Cambridge University Press, 152-153. According to Morgan, '"Trouble" from the Natives was taken as a good excuse to commit atrocities against them'.

223 THOMAS, 1869, *op. cit.*, unnumbered pages.

224 TASMANIAN MAIL SUPPLEMENT, 23 August 1879. Note also, for example: 'It was only when frenzied by the brutal treatment they received from convict servants and bushrangers that they became implacable enemies to the settlers, and within a few years their ultimate extermination became a certainty' (ANON, 1894, *op. cit.*, 27).

225 MORGAN, *op. cit.*, 151.

226 *Ibid.*, 152. Sally Morgan also contends that, in spite of a few graphic accounts, the actual hard evidence which settlers provided of atrocities committed by Tasmanian bushrangers and convict stockmen was scant.

A related example of blame dodging by assigning it to another is to be found in the tactic of personal demonisation employed by the serious historian, James Backhouse Walker, who, in a speculative aside, wondered if the whole 'war of extermination with all its attendant horrors', might have been averted if it had not been for 'Lt Moore's error at Risdon'.[227] The 'error' to which Walker referred took place on 3 May 1804, when Moore gave orders to fire a carronade at what is now universally acknowledged to have been a hunting party of some three hundred Aboriginal men, women and children. Backhouse Walker could allow Moore an 'error', but gratuitous brutality could no more be ascribed to the soldiers than it could to the settlers.

'The Risdon Cove massacre', as the event became known, caused the writers of the nineteenth century tourist guides some problems. Many of them recorded the historical significance of the Risdon settlement. Some of these chose not to mention the massacre at all. Thomas' 1873 guide conceded that the party at Risdon 'had fatal encounters with the aboriginal inhabitants',[228] and Whitworth's *Tasmanian Gazetteer and Road Guide* of 1877 also admitted that on 3 May 'a fatal encounter with aborigines' took place.[229] But neither guide stated for whom the encounter had been fatal. Not until 1894 did a tourist guide go so far as to say that the 'lamentable conflict' took place because the soldiers were 'apparently panic stricken, and apprehensive of attack'.[230] But, of course, there was no mention of the allegations made at the enquiry into the incident: that Moore was intoxicated when he gave the order to fire, and that the shooting arose from a brutal desire on the part of the soldiers "to see the niggers run".[231]

A further technique used to demonstrate the moral rectitude of the settlers was to point out that no effort or expense had been spared in looking after the comforts of the 'residue', as the Aboriginal survivors of the Black War were commonly termed. This is best exemplified by an extract from Stoney's work. The author claimed that this group of 200, who were housed in exile on Flinders Island between 1832 and 1847, were given 'at the expense of the colony':

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227 TASMANIAN MAIL, 14 December 1889, p5.

228 THOMAS, 1873, *op. cit.*, unnumbered pages.

229 WHITWORTH, R P, 1877; *Tasmanian Gazetteer and Road Guide Containing the Most Recent and Accurate Information as to Every Place in the Colony*; Baillaire, Hobart, 172.

230 ANON, 1894, *op. cit.*, 24.

231 ROBSON, 1983, *op. cit.*, 46. It is probable that the evidence that the soldiers had been so motivated, contained in official dispatches, was not widely known. Indeed, it may well have been actively suppressed.

> in addition to [an] abundance of their natural food ... dwellings, ample rations of flour and meat, bedding, clothes, garden implements, seeds, fishing-tackle, and all things which could be necessary for their present or improved condition; besides medical attendance, and the means of careful and judicious instruction in all things fitting or possible for them to learn.[232]

Then, at Oyster Cove, the forty-seven who survived Flinders Island:

> [had] all their wants ... supplied from government funds, which annually averages £1,000, including the salaries of store-keeper, medical officer, and chaplain.[233]

If, after all this, Stoney implied, 'they became gradually extinct', then surely the European invaders could hardly be blamed. They had done all they could to ensure the survival of the Aborigines; if they persisted in dying out, then the reason had to be attributable to a cause to which no blame could attach – and the recently formulated Darwinian code of biological necessity provided the answer. As it was put in 1889, the Aboriginal race was 'weeded out to make way for its stronger successor'.[234]

And for those who might still be prepared to attach blame to the Whites, further proof of their selfless humanity could be found. This took the form of a hero, a man who risked his life countless times to save the Aborigines from destruction. This man was G A Robinson, 'well known as the friend and pacificator of the Aborigines', who, when all else had failed in 1830, 'allured them to quit their hiding places and submit to the government'.[235] Far better that his inspiring tale should be told than gruesome tales of the Black War.

Robinson featured not only in Stoney's work and in tourist guides (one of which had him 'single-handedly' rounding up the remaining Blacks[236]), but he was also lauded by Michel as the one bright spot in a dark story. His career, in some instances, was linked with that of Truganini, who accompanied him with various other 'decoy' Natives.

In fact, Truganini, even more than Robinson, was elevated to mythical status. Endowed with being the last remaining Tasmanian Aborigine, she was constantly and quite inaccurately referred to as Queen. In her declining years she was feted, being frequently dressed in ball gowns, photographed and entertained. After her

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232 STONEY, *op. cit.*, 32.

233 *Ibid.*, 95.

234 TASMANIAN MAIL, 18 May 1889, p9.

235 STONEY, *op. cit.*, 31.

236 ANON, 1894, *op. cit.*, 29.

death, a steam ship was named after her, and a massive east coast granite rock was christened by S H Wintle "Truganini's Throne". Between 1885 and 1892, this feature was mentioned in no fewer than five tourist guides.[237] Truganini was celebrated not only for her unique status, her "romantic" life and her distinctive personality: she served also as a symbol. She was the "last Tasmanian Aborigine".

FIGURE 2.11

TRUGANINI

With her death, a sad chapter in the island's life could be considered closed. When in the 1880s it was suggested that maybe she was not the last Aboriginal Tasmanian, the suggestion was hotly denied.[238] The debate over this matter,

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237 HAYWOOD, 1885a, *op. cit.*, 77; HAYWOOD, 1885b, *op. cit.*, 93; TASMANIAN STEAM NAVIGATION COMPANY, 1886, *op. cit.*, 72; WALCH, 1889, *op. cit.*, 59, and BUTTON, 1892, *op. cit.*, 71.

238 Such a suggestion was made, with evidence, in 1882, six years after Truganini's death. The woman then put forward as 'the last of her race' was Fanny Cochrane Smith, a pensioner who lived on £24 per year. Although it was stated in Parliament by Mr Lynne MHA that her claim was void on account of her father having been a 'Scotchman', it was subsequently suggested that Lynne was confusing her with somebody else (TASMANIAN MAIL, 16 September 1882, p18). Quite a different reason for the official denial of her title was put forward in the columns of the *Tasmanian Mail*: 'Mrs Fanny Cochrane Smith is ... now the real, live, last of the aborigines of Tasmania, and should have taken her place at the Queen's birthday balls, when Billy and Truganini, and Wapperty, and the others showed off their white kid gloves and enjoyed the sherry and tarts at Government House, but

however, did not feature in the tourist literature of the time: its writers were perfectly content to describe Tasmania's Aborigines as part of the "dead past".

With the race "extinct" and unable to argue, they could be post-humously commodified. This began to happen to some extent in the 1880s. Actual tourist sites connected with Tasmania's Aborigines, however, hardly existed and they were not exploited. Wybalenna, the settlement created specifically for housing the Aborigines exiled from Tasmania, was on Flinders Island, which, according to a 1942 visitor, was a 'dead letter' for tourists until the advent of the aeroplane.[239] Besides, as a visitor in 1872 found, it was falling into ruins:

> The Superintendent's quarters are almost incapable of repair. The brick church, as far as its interior is concerned, is in a pitiable condition, and is used as a shearing shed. The state of the burial grounds is truly deplorable. No vestige of any fence remains. The graves are scarcely distinguishable.[240]

On the main island of Tasmania there was a stone building at Oyster Cove, about 50 kilometres south of Hobart, where the last group of tribal Aborigines were lodged between 1847 and 1871. This was described by Stoney in 1856,[241] and mentioned in passing in Thomas' early tourist guides. To be found at the site, the reader was told, was: 'the neat homestead erected by Dr Crowther to the thriftless lives of those all but extinct aborigines, whose decay has so lately claimed the notice of the passer-by'.[242] Later tourist guides, however, failed to mention the site.

Tasmanian Aborigines were commodified in four other ways. The first way was by means of books. In 1890, Ling Roth produced *The Aborigines of Tasmania*, which it was claimed contained everything that was known about the Tasmanian tribes. The first edition was quickly sold out and soon commanded a greatly enhanced price.[243] From this fact may be gauged the extent of public interest in the topic.

The second form of commodification was *via* the media of photography and painting. Beattie, on taking over Anson's studio, inherited many photographs which

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having married a gentleman following the lucrative industrial employment of sawyer, she is out of the pale of the *haut ton* of the city' (TASMANIAN MAIL, 15 April 1882). Fanny Cochrane Smith died in 1905.

239 BARRETT, *op. cit.*, 235.

240 BROWNRIGG, M, 1872; First Voyage, in MURRAY-SMITH, S (Ed.), 1979; *Mission to the Islands: the Missionary Voyages in Bass Strait of Canon Marcus Brownrigg, 1872-1885*; Hobart, 19.

241 STONEY, *op. cit.*, 95.

242 THOMAS, 1869, *op. cit.* 151.

243 JPP 1899/82: *The Tasmanian Aborigines* by J B Walker.

predated his arrival in Australia, let alone his debut as a Tasmanian photographer. Yet this did not deter him from appropriating the images, appending his own name to them and marketing them to tourists. Some indeed appeared as illustrations in tourist guides, including the 1894 *Thomas Cook Guide.* Such photographs commanded considerable interest, and sold well.

FIGURE 2.12

TASMANIAN ABORIGINES AT OYSTER COVE

Alongside photographs, nineteenth century paintings of Aborigines inevitably look stilted to the modern eye. To contemporary observers, however, they held great appeal. The most celebrated work of the period was unquestionably Robert Dowling's *Aborigines of Tasmania.* This painting was exhibited at the Mechanics Institute, Launceston until 1891, when it was transferred to the newly opened Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery. Haywood's guide book described it as the most valuable work in the collection.[244] The Tasmanian Steam Navigation Company's guide found it 'the more interesting from the fact that the race was extinct'.[245] And the Union Steamship's guide concluded that on the strength of this canvas alone the artist should be 'immortalised in his native land'.[246] To a modern observer, however, Dowling treated his subjects as 'ethnological specimen[s],

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244 HAYWOOD, 1885a, *op. cit.*, 109.

245 TASMANIAN STEAM NAVIGATION COMPANY, *op. cit.*, 27.

246 UNION STEAMSHIP COMPANY, 1891, *op. cit.*, 32.

embalmed in academic paint'.[247] Yet, if this was how the painting was perceived in the 1880s and 1890s, that was not necessarily to its disadvantage. Ethnology during this period was very much in favour, and tourists generally were intrigued with this new "science", hence the interest in the other two types of commodification of Tasmanian Aborigines.

FIGURE 2.13

ABORIGINES OF TASMANIA: DOWLING

The first of these involved the treatment of aboriginal artifacts as commodities. These were on display at the Tasmanian museum from at least 1869.[248] The second ethnological commodification of Aborigines was the most direct of all. It involved treatment of Aboriginal skeletal material itself as a commodity. In this case, though, the public was not as blandly accepting as they appeared to be in the case of the displayed artifacts. The notorious exhumation of Truganini's corpse was well enough known for Garnet Walch, in his 1889 tourist guide, to refer to 'a choice bit of body snatching amongst certain Hobart medicos', and to expect his readers to pick up the hint.[249] Haywood, in his 1885 guide book, was more explicit. He was moved to write the following passage after mentioning the rock formation, "Truganini's Throne":

> Ah! poor Truganini, the last of her race, whose body was, with great pomp and show, buried at the Cascades. Yes, but only for a

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247 CONRAD, *op. cit.*, 171.

248 Reference to these is made in THOMAS, 1869, *op. cit.*, 54 and HILL, 1875, *op. cit.*, 415.

249 WALCH, *op. cit.*, 59.

> little while, as some months afterwards, at dead of night, the coffin, which held all that was mortal of her, was lifted, the body taken out, and two doctors set to work and cleared from off the bones every scrap of flesh. This being finished, the remnants that were left and useless, found a place again in the coffin, and were returned to mother earth. The bones of this poor creature, after being well "scraped" and divested of all impurities, were taken away, to be stuck up in some museum.[250]

However, later in 1885, when Haywood brought out the revised edition of his guide, after identifying "Truganini's Throne", he moved on to describe the next east coast attraction. The section on Truganini's skeleton was entirely deleted.[251]

In the years following Truganini's death, Aboriginal remains became harder to obtain and the price they commanded went up accordingly. The Tasmanian Museum, which had acquired Truganini's skeleton,[252] was, by repute, unscrupulous in the methods it used to enhance its collection. Waubadebar was a young Aboriginal woman who died under suspicious circumstances in a boat off Bicheno in the 1820s. She was buried locally, and a decade after her death the White residents of the area augmented her grave with a railing and monument. Then, in 1892, the Museum arranged for her secret exhumation. All the skeletal material in the grave was dug up, dumped in a box marked "Native Currants" and shipped to Hobart, where it was assembled and displayed. Although there was some concern expressed by the locals that they had not been consulted, and indignation was expressed that the disinterment had not been performed 'publicly, respectably and reverently',[253] it was still regarded as perfectly appropriate that Waubadebar should:

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250 HAYWOOD, 1885a, *op. cit.*, 77. This story, literally one of the skeletons in Tasmania's closet, was passed over by James Fenton in his *A History of Tasmania*, which was published the previous year. Yet Fenton had no such compunction about describing the gruesome fate of William Lanne, who was regarded as the last surviving male Tasmanian, and whose body had been similarly disposed of when he died in 1869. 'Even if no osteological record of the race had been preserved', Fenton wrote, 'such doings would have been indecent, unwarrantable, and repugnant to every feeling of propriety' (FENTON, J, 1884; *A History of Tasmania;* J Walch & Sons, Hobart, 382). It is inconceivable that Fenton would have been ignorant of what had happened to Truganini's remains, and probable that he performed an act of self-censorship.

251 HAYWOOD, 1885b, *op. cit.*, 93. This act of self-censorship may be compared with Haywood's decision to cut the reference to the Moorina Chinese murders in the same edition (see page 55 n50).

252 ROBSON (1991, *op. cit.*, 8) contends that Truganini's skeleton was on display from 1904, yet ANON (1894, *op. cit.*, 51) states that the skull was among the museum's exhibits ten years earlier.

253 TASMANIAN MAIL, 30 September 1893, p6.

> occupy the comfortable quarters provided for her in a glass case alongside the remains of the others of her race, where she will be a subject of interest for all time, a distinction she could not possibly have attained by continuing her secluded residence at Bicheno.[254]

Despite the offence which body snatching held for such as Haywood, it may safely be assumed that the majority of Tasmanians and visitors to the island saw nothing amiss in the actual display of Aboriginal remains. The race was presumed extinct, the interests of science were thought to be served by such displays and the feelings of those who were descended from the original tribal population were simply not considered.

2.7 SILENCES

Donald Horne defines "Silences" as: 'What is significantly missing'. He then goes on to say that '[a] public culture is full of "silences". So, often, is a museum, or any other tourist experience.'[255]

By the mid 1890s, the tourist guide books were silent on a number of aspects of the colony's culture, including aspects which had profound historical significance. In some cases, the reason for the silence is plain. For example, no reference exists in the tourist literature to homosexuality, even though the presumed persistence of sodomy among the colony's convicts gave the anti-transportations their most potent argument against perpetuation of the System.[256] In the general literature, veiled references to the topic are few. In *His Natural Life*, Clarke implied that the effeminate Kirkland was subjected to homosexual assault in the Port Arthur Penitentiary where such practices were thought to be common. Some fifteen years earlier James Bonwick, in his popular book, *The Bushrangers*, had coyly stated that:

> The separation of the sexes may be a deserving infliction for offences, but it is attended with far greater evils than it seeks to punish.[257]

As a rule, though, the subject was taboo. Reference to it had helped serve a political end. Thereafter, its very existence was denied.

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254 TASMANIAN MAIL, 23 September 1893, p34.

255 HORNE, D, 1993; The Un-accidental Tourist: How to Be a More Intelligent and Useful Traveller and Save the World, *Australian Magazine, 17-18 April 1993*, pp10-16.

256 ROBSON, 1983, *op. cit.*, 491-492.

257 BONWICK, *op. cit.*, 7-8.

Such, however, was not the case with cannibalism. The tale of Pearce, who ate his fellow escapees from Macquarie Harbour, and in the process acquired a taste for human flesh, found its way into many tourist guides.[258] Homosexuality might have been regarded as beyond the pale in late nineteenth century Australia, but there was no lack of appetite for the sensational.

Other notable aspects of Tasmania's past – particularly where they were overtly linked to sensitive features of the present society – were treated to silence for clear political reasons. For example, no reference was made to the several leading Tasmanians who had been, or who had descended from, convicts. Neither did guide books, when they described the general rejoicing at the abolition of transportation, mention the fact that the owners of the largest estates – the very pillars of society – jointly petitioned Governor Denison that the System be continued, simply to guarantee their supply of cheap labour. The emergence, organisation and achievements of the Tasmanian working class were likewise ignored. But perhaps the most deafening silence in all the period's tourist literature is to be found in its treatment of women.[259]

Three Tasmanian women only qualified for mention in the tourist guides: Lady Jane Franklin, Louisa Anne Meredith and Truganini. As a class, the settlers wives were ignored, and presumably regarded as mere adjuncts of their husbands. Tasmania's female convicts also failed to qualify for comment. There are three possible reasons for this. In the first place, female convicts' lives could not be sensationalised as easily as could be the lives of the men. In the second, they could not be said to have left the colony for the gold fields of Victoria, as was said about the men; the women were thus clearly still present, or their descendents were. And thirdly, women convicts were ignored because to acknowledge their existence would be tantamount to admitting that a considerable percentage of the colony's mothers had worked as whores.

The facts are that approximately 60,000 men were transported to Tasmania and 13,000 women, not an insignificant number. The women were initially assigned to

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258 See, for example, HAYWOOD, 1885b, *op. cit.*, 32. Haywood, a humanist, believed that the episode showed 'the extremes to which [those] poor creatures [ie the Macquarie Harbour convicts] were driven, who, bent upon escape, had no thought of future prospects, or even the consequences that would, if captured, follow'.

259 It should also be pointed out that in a very thorough tour of European historical sites, made during the 1980s, Donald Horne concluded that: 'European tourism is so patriarchal that to go on repeating the point would be tedious. With exceptions such as the Virgin Mary and Joan of Arc, women are simply not *there*.' (HORNE, 1984, *op. cit.*, 4.)

settlers to perform domestic duties. Later, many were detained in "female factories" which were opened in Hobart (1828), Launceston (1834) and Ross (1847). Finally, a convict Hulk, the *Anson*, was moored at Hobart, and used to hold female prisoners until 1851. In fact, a novel was written which predated *His Natural Life* by over a quarter of a century about a female convict who met her end on the *Anson*. This was *The Broad Arrow* by Oline Keese, who had been a long-term resident of Hobart during the convict period. Although lacking the power of Clarke's writing at its best, Keese's novel – also about a wrongfully punished convict – was equally romantic in style and epic in scope. Perhaps because it featured a woman in its central role and was therefore unable to enter the sensational world of male convicts, it failed to achieve the extraordinary success of Clarke's work. It was never dramatised, and failed to rate a mention in the tourist guides of the nineteenth century.

The female convict sites were likewise ignored by the guide books. Stoney, atypically, advised that the Cascades female penitentiary was 'worth inspecting from the extreme regularity and order with which it is kept'.[260] No other tourist guide mentioned it, and the one produced by the Tasmanian Steam Navigation Company, in its description of every major building in Macquarie Street, simply ignored the imposing sandstone structure. The site was never promoted as one of interest to tourists and when the paupers and lunatics who were housed there were cleared out to New Norfolk in the 1890s, the building was used for a number of purposes, but generally neglected, until, like so many examples of Tasmania's convict-built heritage, it fell into terminal disrepair.

2.8 SUMMARY

As Tasmanians began to prosper in the 1880s so the colony's past was felt increasingly as a burden. With a new age apparently established as a reality rather than a dream, it seemed to the ruling class more than ever fitting that a veil should be drawn across the past. And this meant *all* aspects of the past, for all the past was felt as burdensome, not merely the convict past or the past of the Black War. For, as Lowenthal has written:

> Wholesale destruction of a dreaded or oppressive past has marked iconoclastic excesses since time immemorial.... To exorcise bygone corruptions, even one's own treasured relics may have to be destroyed.[261]

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260 STONEY, *op. cit.*, 22.

261 LOWENTHAL, *op. cit.*, 67.

Thus Just, when advertising his colony in 1879, could say hopefully that there was an 'Absence of Historical Annals'.[262] Accordingly, no material aspect of the Tasmanian past was commemorated. The first settlements in south and north were neglected and allowed to decay. Even the Lady Franklin Museum, whatever noble aspirations might have attended its creation, was, like Risdon and York Town, a failure. All three had been mistakes, and, along with every other aspect of Tasmania's past prior to 1879, it was best that they be forgotten.[263]

Only one time-honoured national trait of Tasmanians did the establishment regard as worthy of advertisement, and this was the fact that the settlers were proud Britons. This much was ubiquitously proclaimed by the official nomenclature of both the island's natural features and its towns and villages. In keeping with this emphasis, Just, having dismissed the rest of Tasmania's past, did find it 'necessary to notice the succession of Lt Governors and Governors, those distinguished gentlemen who have represented the royalty of Great Britain in this land'.[264]

In the light of this interpretation of Tasmania's past, it is perhaps not surprising that once it was burnt out, Port Arthur's Church, alone of the old penal settlement's buildings, was almost universally enjoyed. For not only was its ruined state a fitting symbol of a regime being eroded by the hand of time,[265] it now served precisely as a "romantic ruin"; as such it might well have been transported directly from England. In addition, it has been argued by Peter MacFie, for several years Port Arthur's official historian, that this 'obsession with the Church as a "romantic ruin"' served another purpose, for it 'prevented ... many ... from seeing [it] as a place where the State attempted to control the minds of prisoners, many in chains, and all under the guard of armed British soldiers'.[266] The other Port Arthur buildings should have been destroyed, Pillinger believed, because they were 'monuments of disgrace to the *British* Government' [emphasis added].

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262 JUST, *op. cit.*, 10.

263 Just informed his readers that 'everything worth recording' about Tasmania was to be found in John West's 'admirable history' (*loc. cit.*). From this it may be concluded that Just felt that nothing worth recording had occurred in Tasmania between 1852, when West's history was published, and 1879 .

264 JUST, *op. cit.*

265 Lowenthal sees ruins as attractive partly as 'emblems of tyranny overcome ... [of] fearsome rulers gone to just deserts' (LOWENTHAL, *op. cit.*, 175).

266 MACFIE, P, 1988; Alexander North, *Tasman Peninsula Chronicle* 4 , 15-19.

The one aspect of Tasmania's unwanted past which eventually the writers of the tourist guide books could ignore no longer was the Black War. This was history written by the victor, and the victor had to appear not merely victorious but noble in the "British tradition". The ruling class had reaped the greatest benefits from the Black War; for, as Henry Reynolds has pointed out: 'Most whites did not acquire black land.... All the best land wrested from the Aborigines was given away as free grants to 100 or so families, many of whom remain on the land to the present day'.[267] It was necessary therefore that a popular history be written which, in Plumb's words, sanctioned the 'authority and status' of this new ruling class – hence the historian's tactic of blaming the convict class for all atrocities. This aspect of Tasmania's past was also interpreted in such a way as to make the present state of affairs appear inevitable. A crude interpretation of Darwin's theory suggested that the Blacks had to die out in order to let the Whites triumph. Nothing, it was implied, not even the heroism of Robinson, could have prevented this.[268]

Against these "official" uses of the past may be set the exploitation of the past for commercial gain. Here the melodramas, the novels, the exhibition of the *Success* and the commodification of Port Arthur all played a similar part, albeit with differing levels of authenticity. The melodramas and novels were total fabrications. Their audiences were allowed the vicarious thrills afforded them by the stories they told. They offered simple escape, not just escape from the present but escape from the real world. Not so the Port Arthur settlement or the *Success.* However falsely they were interpreted, their fabric was real, it had borne witness. The interpreters, that is the guides and showmen, perceived, perhaps correctly, that what their audiences wanted was to be shocked, to be taken temporarily into a horror world of floggings and soundproof pitch dark cells and violent madmen – and then to be allowed to return, no doubt relieved, to the present day. Economic sense demanded that this demand be met. But despite this simple trade relationship, another transaction inevitably took place between the silent testimony of the prisons and the sensibilities of the early tourists. It takes place today, less at Port Arthur than at

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267 REYNOLDS, 1988, *op. cit.*

268 Indeed, there is no doubt that Robinson's exploits were heroic, and his achievements remarkable. But, from an Aboriginal perspective, it is interesting to ask what was achieved? Perhaps only that two hundred people were led to die under conditions of relative peace, their spirits broken, rather than left to perish more swiftly, but possibly with greater dignity, under continued conditions of warfare. From the point of view of the Whites who were writing the histories, however, Robinson's accomplishments were far more clear cut, for by rounding up the remaining Blacks he certainly saved many white lives. Yet this was never stated: with a becoming graciousness, those who elevated Robinson to near sainthood praised him only as "the protector of the Blacks".

Fremantle Gaol, so much more recently decommissioned. The place has an inescapable atmosphere, its *gravitas* is sobering and effects the mood despite the glib stories of the ex-stipendaries who act as its guides.[269]

In the relics and stories of Tasmania's penal past, particularly in Port Arthur, there was, therefore, for those who looked for it, a potential to teach, moreover to teach directly through the emotions. This was perceived intellectually by James Backhouse Walker (who articulated it even if he failed to practice it), and intuitively by John Beattie.

Before 1893, Beattie was known only as a photographer. Yet the photographs he sold in large numbers were a testimony to a truth about the past which otherwise was sensationalised, romanticised or denied. Some of the photographs sold by Beattie, including a portrait taken in the 1860s of nine surviving Aborigines at Oyster Cove and several of the last "old crawlers" to leave Port Arthur, are among the most poignant and telling photographic images ever to have been produced in Tasmania. They speak eloquently and movingly of the lives of their subjects. They personalise the convict and aboriginal past, thereby making it relate directly to us as part of our inescapable heritage.

Beattie's work, however, was not yet history in the sense which Plumb used the word. It did not teach about social change, and it was only a critical force in as much as its very assertiveness defied the complacent and vainglorious Tasmanian establishment of the day. The documentary evidence which Beattie exhibited and sold was not yet interpreted in any critical sense. But the work did sell well. This no doubt helped Beattie, the indefatigable collector and energetic publicist. It also laid the foundations for what were to be the first attempts to provide a serious historiography for the tourist market. These emerged between 1893 and 1914, paradoxically a period which was in many ways more conservative than the 1880s.

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269 The author was among a party guided through Fremantle Gaol in 1993, eighteen months after its decommissioning. Its atmosphere was palpable.

CHAPTER 3: PROUDLY TASMANIAN, 1893 TO 1913

3.1 ADVERTISING TASMANIA

In 1892, Tasmania was, like the other Australian colonies, in deep depression. The liberal Fysh Ministry's policy of public service retrenchments was unpopular, and the colony's huge deficit was increasing annually. In August, Henry Dobson, Leader of the Opposition, moved a successful motion of no confidence in the government, and a conservative ministry with Dobson as the new Premier was duly sworn in.

Dobson was quick to see the international promotion of Tasmania and the attraction of tourists as key ways in which the colony's fortunes could be turned around. In fact, he was able to demonstrate this commitment just three weeks after he assumed office, when he was asked to support a Tasmanian International Exhibition planned to be held in Hobart over the summer of 1894-95. Buoyed by the success of the previous Tasmanian International Exhibition which had been held in Launceston in 1891-92, and which had attracted 262,059 visitors,[1] Dobson offered the deputation the goodwill of his cabinet and a grant of £6,000, a far more generous subsidy than had been agreed to by the ousted Fysh ministry.[2]

In January 1993, Dobson made a key policy speech. Again he stressed the importance of attracting tourists to the colony. The only way in which Tasmania could succeed, he said, was by advertising.[3] He called a public meeting to enlarge upon his theme, but only sixty people turned up, and not one hotel-keeper among them. Seemingly undeterred, the Premier told the small gathering that it was desirable to create a tourist bureau and information office as well as establishing a branch of Cook's Tourist Agency. He also said that he would advise cabinet to provide government subsidy towards the project.

Various other members of parliament of various persuasions spoke in support of the Premier's vision, including the newly elected independent member for Sorell, the Rev. Woollnough. It was then agreed that an association be formed 'to give effect to the purposes named', its members to pay an annual subscription of not less

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1 MERCER, P, 1981; The Tasmanian International Exhibition 1894-95 – an Ephemeral Event, Or a Lasting Legacy?, *THRA* 28 (1), 17-41. The number of visitors includes those who visited the exhibition more than once, having purchased season tickets. Common sense suggests that the number of individuals who visited the Exhibition was much smaller.

2 MERCURY, 9 September 1892. Quoted in MERCER, *op. cit.*

3 TASMANIAN MAIL, 21 January 1893, p33.

than 10/-. A provisional committee of management was elected with Dobson himself as the association's President.

Over the next year, the Tasmanian Tourist Association, as it became known, undertook a great deal of trail-blazing activity. In September, arrangements were made to share office space with a branch of the Thomas Cook Agency, which had been attracted to Tasmania.[4] A clerk with the Railways Department was appointed as Secretary of the new Association, and in November the government sanctioned an expenditure of £750 to subsidise amounts raised locally for the conservation and improvement of 'beauty spots'.[5] Local branches of the Association were soon set up at Port Esperance and Deloraine. A batch of leaflets on Port Arthur and Tasman Peninsula, the northwest coast and the Mt Bischoff tin mine were prepared and distributed, as well as a leaflet for passing cruise ship passengers entitled *How to Spend a Few Hours in Hobart.* However, there remained many areas in which little had been done. Accommodation was generally scarce and spartan, much necessary track cutting had not passed the planning stage and there was also a lack of maps. Moreover, membership of the TTA had not met initial expectations.

The Association also encountered opposition, for, despite bipartisan political support, the TTA's belief in the need to develop Tasmania's tourist industry was not shared by all. The landed gentry, in particular, were opposed to any move to turn southern Tasmania into a 'tawdry tea garden for filthy business' sake'.[6] The conservative politician, N J Brown, 'deprecated the creation of the impression that the colony was in any way dependent upon visitors',[7] and the *Tasmanian Mail* spoke for many when it said: 'A host of travellers, with more or less lengthy purses, would be a very good thing, but a few hundred people who would come to stay and cast in their lot with us would be very much better'.[8]

By 1894, the depression had deepened further; Dobson failed to pass crucial legislation through the upper house and resigned after barely eighteen months in office. The President of the TTA was no longer Premier, and the previous level of government support could no longer be expected.

The new ministry was headed by the liberal Sir Edward Braddon, who remained Premier until October 1899. He lacked Dobson's enthusiasm for tourism, and, more

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4 TASMANIAN MAIL, 9 September 1893, p18.

5 TASMANIAN MAIL, 4 November 1893, p35.

6 MOSLEY, *op. cit.*, 28.

7 MERCURY, 30 January, 1890.

8 TASMANIAN MAIL, 20 May 1893, p20.

importantly, he was absolutely committed to the reining in of the colony's deficit. His tactic was to take what became known as "Braddon's axe" to the public service, and it was successful. His government achieved its first budget surplus in 1895, and increased it each year until 1900.[9] However, a policy of such economic stringency did not allow for the degree of support desired by the Tourist Association.

Dobson led a deputation to the Premier in May 1894, requesting £500 to build tourist accommodation at Great Lake and to publish a new guide book in time for the Exhibition. He argued that New Zealand and the mainland colonies were stealing a march on Tasmania in attracting tourists, but Braddon was unimpressed, holding that money was tight and that a private company should build the hotel.[10]

Braddon was also unconvinced that tourism could be the means of the colony's economic salvation. In the first place, in spite of keen anticipation, the International Exhibition of 1894-5 was not a success.[11] Secondly, overall tourist figures had been in decline since 1890 when there were 23,000 arrivals. By 1895 this figure had fallen to 19,000.[12]

The government grant to the Tourist Association was pegged at a niggardly £200 per annum, but the committee continued to develop the industry in a cohesive way which had been unthinkable before its inception. Information about Tasmania was made available in Melbourne, Sydney, Adelaide, Brisbane, Auckland and Dunedin. Route maps were also prepared and distributed. The government was persuaded to erect accommodation houses at Lake St Clair and at the Hartz Mountains, and the Tourist Association arranged for transport to these districts.[13]

At the end of the 1896 parliamentary session, Dobson again approached Braddon on the Association's behalf. In moving for an adjournment to discuss what he described as 'a matter of great urgency', he argued that while every summer business was increasing, the Association lacked sufficient funds to staff its office adequately. He believed that his comprehensive promotional scheme could be put into effect for an outlay of a further £400 per year for each of three years. He

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9 REYNOLDS, H, 1963; *The Island Colony*; Unpublished MA thesis, University of Tasmania, 175.

10 TASMANIAN MAIL, 26 May 1894, p32.

11 No exhibits were received from England or America or any foreign country, and of the Australian colonies only Victoria contributed (MERCER, *op. cit.*).

12 MOSLEY, *op. cit.*, Figure 1.

13 TASMANIAN MAIL, 21 December 1895, p7.

requested £200 of this from the government, and intimated that Hobart Corporation and the citizens of Hobart would be approached for £100 each.

By way of reply, Braddon read an anonymous report, which evidently emanated from the Railways Department. It argued that tourism in Tasmania was being capably cared for by the joint services of Railways and the Thomas Cook Agency. The former had produced in 1894 *The Railway Official Guide Book to Tasmania,* 20,000 copies of which had been disseminated. Cook's *Travellers' Gazette* also contained full details of its Tasmanian tours, and 5,000 copies of that were printed monthly and distributed in all parts of the world. The report detailed many other Cook publications which advertised Tasmania, and explained how in Launceston, Devonport and Strahan, the work of the Agency was being carried out without cost to the government. The Tourist Association, it said, had long been in a moribund condition, and was irrelevant. There followed a heated debate, after which Parliament refused to vote the TTA additional funds.[14]

Despite this refusal the Association continued to grow. By the summer of 1896-97, the depression was seen to be lifting,[15] and tourist numbers were once again on the rise. In 1897, Union Steamships announced the introduction of a much improved service which they believed would 'greatly increase the number of visitors who annually flock to the colony',[16] and the Tourist Association rose to the occasion. New branches were formed,[17] membership expanded, and, in 1898, the committee was enhanced by the inclusion of J W Beattie. Also in 1898, Alexander Morton, curator of the Tasmanian Museum, convinced the trustees to make available to the Association the museum's old aquarium room,[18] and Beattie donated 300 framed photographs of Tasmania to decorate its walls.[19]

In 1899, Braddon was succeeded as Premier by Sir Elliott Lewis, but he was no more sympathetic to the Association than was his predecessor. Moreover, the new local associations which were being created throughout the colony each claimed a

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14 MERCURY, 20 November 1896.

15 ROBSON, 1991, *op. cit.*, 180.

16 TASMANIAN MAIL, 27 November, 1897, p17.

17 Swansea and Spring Bay (1895), New Norfolk (1899), Northwestern (1904), Strahan (1906), Zeehan(1908) and Queenstown (1908).

18 TASMANIAN MAIL, 9 July 1898, p4. The aquarium had been closed since 1889 when parliament did not approve the £50 it cost to keep it open for the year (HAJ 1889/102).

19 TASMANIAN MAIL, 5 November, 1898, p17.

share of the government subsidy which remained at £200.[20] Yet throughout this period, tourism to Tasmanian continued its steady rise. In 1899, there were 24,959 arrivals and 20,805 departures. The government statistician calculated that if half of the latter were tourists and each spent £10, then the revenue to the colony was £100,000.[21] With federation the following year, the abolition of inter-colonial customs duties resulted in lower prices for imported goods and simplified procedures for visitors.[22] This additional incentive to tourists helped overcome the negative effect of the Boer War,[23] and the Tourist Association increased its efforts to publicise the state. Photographs and lithographs were displayed in bureaux in the mainland capitals and in Union Steamship offices. That company also produced a new *Guide for Visitors* in 1898. It was written by the wife of the curator of the Tasmanian Museum, illustrated with photographs by Beattie and contained a historical bibliography compiled by J B Walker.[24] It may be assumed that the Tourist Association had a major hand in its creation.

The TTA also produced its own slender volume, *Just the Thing*, which first appeared in 1903 and was initially distributed free of charge.[25] It also produced a fishing guide, regional guides, and a more substantial *Guide Book and Gazetteer*, which was published in 1905. That year, it was estimated that at least 20,000 tourists came to Tasmania, and spent between them £200,000. Yet the government subsidy to the Association remained at £200 divided equally between the north and the south. Determined to improve upon this and encouraged by a change in government, Dobson, now a federal senator and still President of the Association, led a deputation to the new Premier, J W Evans, in June 1905.[26]

He asked for an annual grant of £500 on the basis of £2 for every £1 raised, half of this money to be distributed to the north and half to the south of the state. In support of this request, it was argued that in the past season, 4,000 people had entered their names in the visitors' book at the Association's rooms, 9,000 had been conveyed to the Springs on Mt Wellington in excursions organised by the Association, and passengers travelling to Tasmania by Union Steamships had

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20 MORRIS, C A, 1974; *In Pursuit of the Travelling Man: a Study of Tasmanian Tourism to 1905*; unpublished honours thesis, University of Tasmania, 36.

21 TASMANIAN MAIL, 7 July 1900, p10.

22 WEEKLY COURIER, 20 July 1901, p135.

23 The negative impact of the Boer War upon tourism to Tasmania is mentioned by Morris (*op. cit.*).

24 TASMANIAN MAIL, 31 December 1898, p6.

25 A charge of 1d was introduced in 1906.

26 MERCURY, 3 June 1905.

increased by nearly 50 per cent. However, competition for tourists between Tasmania and New Zealand and the mainland states was intensifying, and the latter were spending increasing sums of money to attract visitors.[27]

In Evans, the Association enjoyed the firm support of a Premier for the first time since Dobson lost office, and, in spite of the unhealthy state of the economy, increased funds were at last awarded to the TTA. This made it possible for the Association's secretary to travel 4,000 miles across the mainland lecturing on Tasmania.[28] The following year, the southern branch of the Association dealt with 2,826 enquiries,[29] and in Launceston 6,750 people visited the TTA office.[30] The Association also organised many drives and marine excursions in both the north and the south. During 1908-09, the southern TTA office was open for 260 hours during November and then for an average of over 12 hours per day from December to April. During the season, an astonishing 11,200 visitors signed the register.[31]

The following year, 1910, the Association produced a daily paper, *The Tasmanian Tourist*, between 1 December and 31 March. It also presented its most ambitious undertaking, a Grand Carnival, which was held at the Agricultural Show Ground, Hobart, for two weeks during February and March. Although this was well attended by both Tasmanians and visitors, it was underbudgeted and made a loss of £1,000. This was met by a bank overdraft, which, in the view of the *Mercury*, crippled the Association's future work.[32]

In fact, the TTA did continue to function effectively for a further four years, still with Senator Dobson as President. During this period, however, the repeated suggestion was made that the Association should be replaced by a state department. Fears were expressed, particularly in the north, that the TTA was directing the tourist traffic towards Association members who had financial interests in tourism; and, with the development of motorised transport, the

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27 New Zealand annually budgeted £20,000 for tourism promotion, and two weeks after returning from a visit to Tasmania, the Premier of New South Wales had been so impressed by the Tourist Association's work that he set aside £10,000 for such work to be carried out in his own state (MERCURY, 3 June 1905).

28 Hortin Bequest, Royal Society Archive, RS6/12: unidentified newspaper, 20 November 1906.

29 MORRIS, *op. cit.*, post script (i).

30 DAILY TELEGRAPH, 22 September 1908; *Report of AGM of the Northen Branch of the TTA.*

31 TASMANIAN TOURIST ASSOCIATION, *Annual Report – 1908-9.*

32 MERCURY, 6 July 1914.

Railways Department was also concerned that business was being directed away from them and into the hands of the principal carrying firms.[33]

In October 1912, J Moore-Robinson, a journalist and amateur historian, was selected from 54 applicants as the Association's new secretary. He took over the editorship of the *Tasmanian Tourist*, rewrote existing brochures and produced new ones,[34] but as a book-keeper he was extremely lax. In June 1914, the Auditor-General tabled a report in the House of Assembly which showed a deficiency of £402 between amounts received by the Association and amounts banked.[35] While the subsequent Royal Commission into the affair did not lead to any prosecutions, the fall-out led to the disbandment of the voluntary organisation and the creation in July 1914 of a state Department of Tourism which was placed under the control of the Railways Department.

When the TTA's liabilities and assets were calculated, the amount outstanding was shown to be in the vicinity of £100, for which the government agreed to take responsibility. Moore-Robinson applied for the directorship of the new tourism Department, but was not short-listed. He subsequently enlisted for service in World War I, and on his return to Tasmania again found employment in the state's tourism industry, where he played a significant if controversial part in the development of historical tourism.

In delivering its epitaph on the TTA, the *Mercury* concluded that:

> although the association [was] ... in financial straits, the State [had] benefited to such an enormous extent by the expenditure for many years on advertising, ... lectures, erection of fingerposts on all important roads, and in numberless other ways, that the present loss [was] infinitesimal in comparison to the enormous gains which [had] otherwise accrued to the State through its labours.[36]

For over twenty years, the various branches of the Tasmanian Tourist Association played a leading role in creating a popular perception of Tasmania, in disseminating that perception and in organising the itineraries of the visitors it lured to the state. Inevitably, the work carried out in these areas was central to the development of Tasmanian historical tourism.

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33 MOSLEY, *op. cit.*, 26.

34 TASMANIAN TOURIST ASSOCIATION, *Annual Report – 1912-13.*

35 MERCURY, 3 July 1914.

36 MERCURY, 6 July 1914.

3.2 TOWARDS A SENSE OF HISTORY

3.2.1 Present versus past

After 1897, when the dispatch of the first shipment of blister copper from the Mount Lyell mine signalled the colony's return to economic buoyancy, two divergent attitudes towards Tasmania's past may be detected. On the one hand was the embarrassment of those who sought to emphasise the progressive present. To the author of the 1908 *Government Handbook,* for example, the ancient ferry across the Derwent was 'something of a curiosity in these go-ahead days'.[37] And the architecture of Hobart appealed 'to the antiquarian rather than to the lover of the beautiful'. Moreover: 'For the most part ... Hobart's public buildings [were] of quite recent construction, and some of them deserve[d] more than a passing glance'.[38]

On the other hand, there emerged an attitude which developed significantly after the First World War. This attitude, basically antiquarian in nature, was fuelled by a recognition that much of Tasmania's built heritage was fast disappearing. It was boosted particularly by the efforts of the *Tasmanian Mail,* which from 1895 included a pictorial centrespread. While as a rule this section featured shots of the island's natural scenery, it also included many photographs not only of the well known structures at Port Arthur, Settlement Island and so forth, but also of several of the colony's relatively unknown old buildings, the existence of many of which was threatened. Throughout July and August 1897, for example, pictures of 'old Hobart' were featured every week.

At this time, even relatively new settlements were becoming conscious of their disappearing heritage. In Strahan in 1896, the firm of F O Henry & Co. was known to be planning the demolition of some old buildings on the Esplanade in order to erect a row of new shops. Among the buildings to be knocked down was the first cottage built in the town, erected by F O Henry only fifteen years earlier. A suggestion was made that this be 'rebuilt on Settlement Island for visitors to see in years to come'.[39]

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37 GOVERNMENT OF TASMANIA, *op. cit.,* 68.

38 *Ibid.,* 53.

39 TASMANIAN MAIL, 8 August 1896, p8. It is interesting to note this early example of the view that "old" objects should be placed on a shared site when the only feature they possess in common is that they are "old". However, nothing came of this proposal and the building was lost.

Another call to protect a building with ties to the past was made in *The Tight Little Island*, written in 1912. Its plea for the preservation of the Old Bell Inn, Hobart, where Marcus Clarke was said to have commenced writing *His Natural Life*, was made 'for the sake of old memories which are associated with such a reminder of Van Diemen's Land'. The inn was built in 1829 and was thought to be a veritable museum of early day relics, such as pewter-ware, pictures and furniture.[40]

Both the above calls were ignored. The financial benefits of the proposals were not apparent. However, throughout the period ending with the outbreak of war, attractions based upon Tasmania's convict past proliferated, and their financial success could not be ignored.

3.2.2 The convict industry

Tasmania's foremost convict attraction during this period continued to be Port Arthur, which is dealt with below. The ruins on Settlement Island were also more vigorously promoted as tourist attractions, and although there was no marked increase in the exploitation of other convict sites for tourists a number of new ventures were developed which sought to exploit interest in the convict past.

3.2.2.1 Settlement Island

Promotion of the west coast to tourists continued vigorously throughout the 1890s and into the twentieth century. While scenery and the mining industry were held up as the major attractions, the penal history of Macquarie Harbour was also given wide coverage. Articles on the subject made frequent appearances in the *Tasmanian Mail* and the *Zeehan and Dundas Herald*, and Settlement Island was given a prominent place in the Emu Bay Railway's *In Tasman's Land* (1903) and in the Western Tasmanian Tourist Association's 1908 publication, *Pictorial Guide to the West Coast of Tasmania.*

West coast residents tended to display less reserve than their eastern compatriots in their attitude towards the convict past, possibly because the notorious Sarah Island penal station closed down as long ago as 1832, and possibly because many of those who lived in the west had migrated from other colonies, and were less embarrassed by the penal era than were the more deeply entrenched Hobartians.

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40 HOGAN, T M and GYE, H, 1913; *The Tight Little Island*; Melbourne, 37. Despite its antiquity and associations, the Old Bell Inn was demolished in 1920.

Frequently, the guide books described the area's history as "romantic", and *His Natural Life* was almost inevitably invoked. In fact, the stage version of Clarke's novel was presented at the Academy of Music in Zeehan in 1897, and was promoted as being of special interest on account of its historical associations with the area.[41]

Although there are no records of the numbers who visited Settlement Island, the west coast as a tourist destination increased in popularity throughout the 1890s. In 1897, Union Steamships introduced a tri-weekly Hobart to Strahan service, a bi-weekly Launceston to Strahan service and a service between Melbourne and Strahan that was alternately bi- and tri-weekly. Additionally, the *Manapouri* sailed from Hobart every week.[42] Over Christmas that year, all the hotels in Strahan were crowded with visitors, principally from Queenstown.[43]

Settlement Island received prominent coverage in the 1898 Union Steamship *Guide* which devoted a page and a half to it and a mere dozen lines to Port Arthur. The reason for this unusual balance may be attributed to the fact that the directors of the Union Company had recently taken out a lease on the island, hoping to exploit its touristic potential.[44]

When this lease was relinquished in 1900,[45] there is no indication that visits to the island decreased, nor did its promotion. In J Stirling's west coast guide of 1903, a chapter is devoted to the settlement. 'Where', Stirling wrote, 'is the spot in all the length and breadth of blood-stained Europe that carries such terrible memorials of man's inhumanity to man as this land-locked harbour?'[46] Having given the almost obligatory advice to read 'Marcus Clarke's sombre and haunting story', he proceeded 'to identify the scenes in which the action of the plot is carried on':

> Everywhere one can note evidences of the close topographical study that Marcus Clarke must have made of the harbour before he sat down to write his book; and, however painful the subject

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41 ZEEHAN & DUNDAS HERALD, 4 January 1897.

42 TASMANIAN MAIL, 27 November 1897, p17.

43 TASMANIAN MAIL, 25 December 1897, p33.

44 UNION STEAMSHIP COMPANY, 1898; *Guide for Visitors to Tasmania*; Mercury, Hobart, 43-44. Mrs Morton of Hobart, the author of this guide, having detailed the convicts' regime, felt obliged to add that the island was now 'a favourite place for picnics, and its new associations [were] all of a holiday sort, connected with the bright and beautiful summer time'.

45 It was taken up by a poultry farmer (S, J, 1903; *In Tasman's Land*; Emu Bay Railway Company, Melbourne, 42).

46 *Ibid.*, 36.

> may be, there is a sombre interest in picking out the different notorious spots that are described in the novel.[47]

If Stirling is to be believed, the locals took Clarke's novel seriously enough to name areas of the harbour such as "Dawes' Cave" after events which befell its 'semi-historical' hero.

The convict relics on Settlement Island were clearly a resource for the people of the west, particularly for Strahan's residents. Directly, they only helped provide income for those who ran the steamer trips across Macquarie Harbour,[48] but indirectly they helped lure tourists to the west, and from this the entire community benefited. However, because no one was personally responsible for the island, no one felt obliged to protect it or to regulate the behaviour of visitors. Consequently, vandalism and souvenir hunting could not be controlled, and both were rife.

In January 1894, a party from Zeehan lit a fire near the ruined courthouse within minutes of their arrival, then sailed to Dead Island where they started a grass fire. When they departed, they took with them Huon pine head and foot boards from the graves. Such incidents, the *Tasmanian Mail* claimed, were frequent.[49] Although this particular act of arson was frowned upon, the souveniring of thumb-marked and initialled convict bricks was remarked upon without comment, and seems to have been condoned. By 1896, hundreds of bricks had been carried away as mementos,[50] and by 1903 those with initials were 'getting very rare'.[51] As much as £10 was also reported as having been offered for a government coat of arms situated above the courthouse door – though it is not clear to whom the offer was made.

The ruins on Settlement Island were, like those at Port Arthur, a prime historical tourist attraction; they were also highly vulnerable. After a visit to Settlement Island in 1897, John Beattie called for the preservation of 'such interesting factors in the country's history before they are lost forever'.[52]

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47 S, J, *op. cit.*, 38. Since Clarke did not visit the west coast, he must presumably have relied upon very accurate descriptions and maps in order to achieve such an apparent degree of verisimilitude.

48 Unlike Port Arthur, Settlement Island attracted no guides, partly perhaps because its last inmates left in 1833 and were not available to return in the capacity of guides. There was also not much left on the island to interpret.

49 TASMANIAN MAIL, 13 January 1894, p10.

50 ZEEHAN & DUNDAS HERALD SUPPLEMENT, 25 December 1896.

51 S, J, *op. cit.*, 42.

52 Beattie Papers, Royal Society Archive, RS29/17.

3.2.2.2 Other convict sites

The only additional convict site to gain a firm place on the tourist itinerary during the period currently under discussion was the ruin of the Coal Mines at Saltwater River on Tasman Peninsula. This site was visited by many who travelled to Port Arthur by the Whitehouse Bros steamer; the underground stone cells were considered to be 'in perfect preservation'.[53] The site, however, was not in any sense commodified. If it made money for anyone, it did so only by encouraging tourists to stay on Tasman Peninsula for an extra night.

Maria Island gained in popularity enormously as a holiday venue after 1904 when the first steam yacht made the journey *via* the newly built East Bay Neck Canal. This took six and a half hours and opened up the sea route.[54] From 1905, the east coast could be reached by coach three times a week from Sorell railway station, and by 1908 a weekly ferry sailed to the island.[55] After the east coast road had been made suitable for motor traffic, trips to the island by charabanc and ferry became possible.[56] By 1913, Maria Island had increased in popularity to the point where it could be described as 'one of the most perfect picnic places belonging to Tasmania'.[57] However, no accommodation was available on the island until 1915.[58]

Unlike Settlement Island, Maria Island had, and indeed still has, much to appeal to tourists besides its penal relics. It boasts spectacular scenery, walking, fishing and a fine east coast climate. Goat shooting was also among its allures. Although the convict site at Darlington (which reverted to its original name following the collapse of Bernacchi's company in 1892) was described in the tourist guides, it seems unlikely that this was a significant factor in enticing tourists. As T Dunbabin, an east coast resident, wrote in 1914:

> Though the island was a penal settlement, off and on, for many years, and some hundreds of prisoners were at one time stationed there, that aspect never appealed to the popular imagination as

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53 TASMANIAN TOURIST ASSOCIATION, 1905; *Guide Book and Gazetteer*; Walch & Son, Hobart, 30.

54 *Ibid.*, 37.

55 GOVERNMENT OF TASMANIA, *op. cit.*, 113.

56 The Tasmanian Tourist Association conducted such a trip by motor charabanc in approximately 1910. The excursion lasted five days and included Maria Island (Hortin Bequest, Royal Society Archives, RS6).

57 TASMANIAN TOURIST ASSOCIATION, 1913; *Tasmania for the Tourist*; Cox Print, Hobart, 74.

58 TASMANIAN GOVERNMENT TOURIST DEPARTMENT, 1915; *Accommodation Directory 1915-1916*; Government Printer, Hobart.

> old Port Arthur has, and the crop of legends is comparatively small.[59]

Nevertheless, the officers' quarters, the cells, a windmill built by convict labour, the cemetery (which included the grave of the exiled Maori Chief, Whangaroa), Smith O'Brien's cottage and 'an interesting row of prison cells' at Long Point, thirteen kilometres south of the capital, were all listed in a 1905 guide as among the island's attractions. Beattie visited Maria Island in 1895 and in 1908, subsequently lecturing on it to the Field Naturalist Club.[60] Although typically he was interested in its convict past and believed that the island should be developed as a popular holiday fixture, he did not put any great effort into promoting it, as he did with Port Arthur.

3.2.2.3 Convict museums and ventures

Hobart's most profitable convict-based tourist attraction was without doubt Beattie's *Port Arthur Museum*, which opened at his photographic studio during the 1890s. Beattie's brother-in-law, Jack Cato, later described its success:

> When the big liners entered the port ... a stream of people poured into John's premises to turn over his albums and buy many hundreds of his pictures ... [and] convict records. They passed up the stairs to the museum at a shilling a time.[61]

There were several other historical museums in Tasmania at this time. Most notable among them was W L Williamson's "Old Curiosity Shop" at Brown's River, south of Hobart. Williamson came to Tasmania from Victoria when a boy in 1856. Like Beattie, he was a compulsive collector. Many of the objects in his museum were acquired when he was a sailor during the nineteenth century. The bulk of the exhibits, though, were Tasmanian. Williamson would personally conduct parties of visitors around his museum, explaining to them the significance of each exhibit. These included convict uniforms, leg irons, cats-o'-nine-tails and criminal records, some of the 'choicest extracts' of which would be read out by the owner. Like Beattie's museum, Williamson's made a healthy profit.[62]

Charles Pill's collection at Campbelltown also contained historical exhibits,[63] and Mr Leek of Devonport owned an extraordinary collection which contained not only 'curios from the days of the convict, the bushranger, and the aboriginals, old and

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59 MERCURY, 18 September 1914; *Maria Island* by T Dunbabin.

60 Beattie Papers, Royal Society Archive, RS29/4 and RS29/6(3).

61 CATO, 1947, *op. cit.*, 84.

62 MERCURY, 11 January 1930.

63 PWD 5/40/Tasman: Moore-Robinson to Minister for Lands, 8 March 1913.

faded documents, relics of the Boer war', but also a 'marvellous freak lamb ... with two distinct bodies, eight legs, four ears, two tails, etc'.[64] There were no doubt other private museums, the existence of which has not come to light.

In 1912, the Tasmanian Museum took its 'first step towards making the Museum a real Museum of Tasmania' by having three Tasmania rooms, the first of which to be finished was the 'history and ethnology' room.[65] However, there is no evidence to suggest that it included convict relics among its historical exhibits.

Also cashing in on this upsurge of interest in the penal period, Walch & Sons, the Hobart publishers, in 1908, re-issued Oline Keese's *The Broad Arrow*, promoting it as 'a real live book about persons who lived in Hobart Town ... [which told] the *truth* about the treatment of prisoners'.[66] But perhaps the most daring speculation that year was the filming of *For the Term of His Natural Life*. This required the English cast and crew to travel to Port Arthur to shoot scenes among the ruins, and the cost rose to what has been described as 'the enormous sum of £7,000'. However, according to the film historians, A Pike and R Cooper, returns more than justified the expense, for when the film was released in Sydney, it became an immediate hit

FIGURE 3.1

POSTER FOR THE FILM OF *TERM...*, 1908

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64 GOVERNMENT TOURIST BUREAU, *op. cit.*, 150.

65 JPP 1913/52. The other two Tasmania rooms were the biology room and the geology and mineralogy room.

66 WALCH'S LITERARY INTELLIGENCER, January 1908, p9.

and ran for an extraordinary eight weeks. It was an enduring success and was frequently revived.[67] This film was followed in 1911 by *The Life of Rufus Dawes*, shot in and around Sydney, which also proved a commercial success.

Apart from the romantic, the sensational and the fictionalised versions of the convict era, there was in 1905 a serious if simplified attempt to relate the true history of Port Arthur. This was in Beattie's Lantern Slide Lecture No 6, *The Convict Days of Port Arthur*. This was subsequently published, and sold well. In the work of Beattie was combined a 'scholarly sense',[68] and profitability. Following Beattie's appointments to the position of Government Photographer in 1896 and to the vice-presidency of the historical section of the Royal Society in 1899, to these attributes may be added respectability.

Beattie's work was a source of interest to an increasing number of locals, as well as being a huge and well marketed draw for tourists. Indeed, such was the force of Beattie as a populariser of the convict era that the Tasmanian Tourist Association could hardly be expected to resist its promotion, especially after Beattie became an energetic and generous committee member of the organisation in 1898. Nevertheless, the TTA was less than enthusiastic about embracing this troublesome Tasmanian theme, and would have preferred to promote quite different aspects of the past.

3.3 THE TASMANIAN TOURIST ASSOCIATION'S VIEW OF THE PAST

In relating to Tasmania's history, the executive of the TTA, as stalwarts of Hobart's establishment,[69] had their approach coloured by a factor which between 1890 and 1914 dominated almost every aspect of Tasmanian life. This was the intense wave of patriotism which rose up during this period, peaking in 1901, when the strong sentiments whipped up by the Boer War were heightened by the death of Victoria, Edward's coronation and a royal visit. According to Lloyd Robson, British sentiment at the time 'knew no bounds'.[70] This attitude coloured both how the TTA

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67 PIKE, A and COOPER, R, 1980; *Australian Film 1900-1977*; Melbourne, 11-12. The revised title of Clarke's book was first used for the edition of 1884.

68 ROE, *op. cit.*

69 Although the TTA possessed members of a liberal persuasion, its President, Henry Dobson, was highly conservative, and its patron was the Governor. In general, the members of the Executive were the pillars of Hobart's conservative business community.

70 ROBSON, 1991, *op. cit.*, 210.

publicised the state's existing historic tourist attractions and how it attempted to promote others which ideologically it was more inclined to favour.

3.3.1 Publicising the past

Since, to many minds, the penal period was a time which reflected no great credit on Britain, its publicity was a matter which demanded sensitive handling. Indeed, the objects of the Association made no mention of the island's historical relics or sites, members only being required: 'To preserve and improve places of natural beauty and interest'.[71] Nevertheless, at least one Tasmanian convict site could hardly be ignored, for, as the TTA's *Guide Book and Gazetteer* pointed out in 1905: 'The tourist does not consider his visit to Tasmania complete unless he "does" Port Arthur'.[72]

Port Arthur was therefore widely publicised by the Association. The Tasman Peninsula was 'well represented' in the photographs which Beattie donated to the TTA room at the museum, as indeed was Macquarie Harbour.[73] Framed photographs of Port Arthur were among those placed in the Union Steamship Company's Melbourne offices in 1900.[74] And each edition of *Just the Thing* from 1902 until 1906 contained details of how to reach 'Carnarvon' from Hobart. Yet in the eight lines devoted to the settlement, there was not one mention of its convict past.

In 1912, the Association brought out its most ambitious publication, *Beautiful Tasmania*. This devoted more space to Port Arthur, although the introductory "history" by Alfred J Taylor, Hobart's sole Librarian at the time, managed to avoid all mention of convicts.[75]

The TTA's final publication was the brochure, *Tasmania for the Tourist*. Its only references to the convict period were in a brief section which described Tasman Peninsula as:

> Possibly the most famous part of Tasmania ... including as it does the ancient and infamous penal establishment of Port Arthur and

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71 TASMANIAN MAIL, 9 September 1899, p30.

72 TASMANIAN TOURIST ASSOCIATION, 1905, *op. cit.*, 29.

73 TASMANIAN MAIL, 5 November 1898, p17.

74 TASMANIAN MAIL, 13 January 1900, p33.

75 TASMANIAN TOURIST ASSOCIATION, 1912; *Beautiful Tasmania*; Government Printer, Hobart.

> Eaglehawk Neck, this place being made historic by the fascinating story told in the pages of Marcus Clark's [*sic*] literary masterpiece.[76]

... and a reference to the penal settlement of Macquarie Harbour which shared 'equally with Port Arthur the stigma and infamy attaching to the convict era'.[77]

But the most revealing insight into the TTA's attitude towards Tasmanian history is provided less by what the Association sought to evade than by what it sought to promote.

3.3.2 Promoting an official past

With the approach of 8 September 1903, the government of the recently reclassified State of Tasmania was forced to consider the public promotion of its past for the first time. For this date marked the centenary of Bowen's landing at Risdon, and could not be allowed to pass uncommemorated. In fact, although celebrations were planned to coincide with the exact centenary, it was found necessary to postpone them because of an outbreak of smallpox which occurred in Launceston in August. A new date in February 1904 was then fixed to coincide with the anniversary of Collins' arrival at Risdon.

Although the Tasmanian Tourist Association did not organise the centenary celebrations, three of its leading members were involved: J W Beattie, A Morton and P F Seager, the Chairman of the TTA's Committee of Management. Beattie and Seager were members of the centenary organising committee and Morton was its secretary. The events spanned five days, and the celebrations included a race meeting, a naval review, illuminations and an axeman's carnival. The centrepiece of the festivities was the unveiling by the Governor of a commemorative plaque erected on a plinth at Risdon Cove. The government bore the cost of this erection, and the ceremony was watched by a large crowd.

The *Tasmanian Mail* brought out a souvenir issue to mark the occasion. Although this commenced with a brief, sanitised epitome of the state's early history and included a history of Launceston and an account of the anti-transportation movement, the bulk of the supplement described Tasmania as it was in 1904: its

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76 TASMANIAN TOURIST ASSOCIATION, 1913, *op. cit.*, 58.

77 *Ibid.*, 80.

state and federal politicians, its press, churchmen, aldermen, societies, banks, sports and industries. There was also a tribute to royalty.[78]

The centenary celebrations were unquestionably an endorsement of the values of the Tasmanian establishment. That Beattie was involved in their organisation should come as no surprise. He was in many ways aligned with the establishment, a Theosophist, a Methodist, a businessman and an investor in the state's mineral industry.[79] He was also a strong propagandist for the Tasmania of his day. He took many photographs of mining and industrial scenes, and his Lantern Lecture No 1 (published in 1902 by the TTA) was tellingly entitled: *Tasmania: Industrial and Scenic.*

Nevertheless, Beattie considered the penal era a vital part of Tasmania's heritage and was not prepared to suppress all mention of it. His most noticeable public contribution to the centennial festivities was by means of his lecture, *Glimpses of the Lives and Times of the Early Tasmanian Governors,*[80] which was delivered to packed houses at the Town Hall on the two evenings prior to the celebrations. This event, somewhat at odds with the rest of the festivities, allowed him scope to indulge his passion.

Three years after the centennial, Beattie was centrally involved in the first attempts by the TTA to commemorate selected aspects of the island's past. This resulted from a suggestion made at a committee meeting in 1907 by the chairman, P S Seager, who raised a topic that was close to his heart: 'the almost complete neglect in Tasmania to mark historic spots'. The committee was stirred by Seager's rebuke, and asked Beattie to supply a report by which the Association might be guided in marking such places. He responded with a paper which began by stating that: 'The places of historic interest in Tasmania which warrant special recognition are very few. They may be considered as numbering six in all:

1) Tasman's landing spot
2) Cook's landing spot on Bruni Island
3) The place on King Island where the British flag was raised in 1802 by Lt-Col Robbins
4) Risdon Cove
5) Collins' landing place at Sullivan's Cove
6) Paterson's Landing Place.'[81]

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78 TASMANIAN MAIL, February 1904; *A Souvenir of Tasmania – Celebration of the Centenary.*

79 ROE, *op. cit.*

80 BEATTIE, J W, 1904; *Glimpses of the Lives and Times of the Early Tasmanian Governors*; Mercury Walch, Hobart.

81 MERCURY, 22 October 1907.

Beattie suggested that in each case the government should make a small reservation of land to allow the erection of a suitable memorial, and that the places should also be recognised on the official charts of the state. Quoting the Premier of New South Wales, he described such spots as 'holy ground'. He also commented upon the 'callous neglect' of St David's Burial Ground, 'bristling as it [was] with records of the actors of a stirring past'. Even the monuments erected to the former governors, Collins and Eardley-Wilmot, were 'fast tumbling to pieces'. Beattie's paper was forwarded to the Premier, but no discernible action flowed from it.

FIGURE 3.2

ST. DAVID'S BURIAL GROUND

The Tourist Association was particularly concerned about the state of the memorials to the two governors. It was suggested that these should be removed from St David's and placed in the Domain, where they could be more prominently displayed.[82] Yet in response to correspondence and a deputation to the Chief Secretary in November 1908, it was made clear that the government would accept no responsibility for either the removal or the renovation of any of the tombstones in the cemetery.[83] Nor were they interested in spending money on commemorating either the sites which Beattie had advocated or the historic spots around the City of Hobart that were also suggested by the Association. In spite of Senator Dobson's view that 'as a matter of patriotism too much could not be done to preserve their

82 MERCURY, 22 September 1908.

83 MERCURY, 20 October 1908.

few historical monuments',[84] the Tasmanian government was simply not prepared to spend its limited funds on such projects.[85]

It therefore seemed that if the Tourist Association wished to celebrate its version of Tasmanian history, it would have to pay for it itself. This it did in 1910 by means of the "Historical Pageant" which was a central feature of the Grand Carnival produced by the TTA that year.

The Great Hobart Pageant was held at the Agricultural Show Ground on 19 February 1910, under the patronage of the Governor, Major-General Sir Henry Barron. The official souvenir program by P Whittington commenced with a brief history of Tasmania. This led the reader through the various European voyages to the island, culminating in Bowen's 1803 arrival 'with a party'. No mention of convicts or Aborigines was made.[86]

The Pageant itself adopted a highly selective approach to Tasmania's history. It opened in 1642 near Batavia, then capital of Java. Native spearmen assembled. 'Semi-barbaric' music was played. A dais equipped with golden thrones 'which are used for Javanese rulers or European Governors on State occasions' was towed into place. Then entered from opposing sides two processions: from the right the Dutch Governor, Anthony Van Diemen, his family and Court, and from the left a native procession of Sovereign, Queen, Rajas, Sultans and so forth.

Both parties were next seen to take their places on the dais, the Dutch national anthem 'broke upon the air, followed by cheers from the whole company'. Javanese maidens then entertained the gathered assembly with a slow dance 'characterised by an unusual degree of grace and decorum'. When this came to an end, Tasman was commissioned 'to explore the coast of the Great South Land (now Australia), with a view to adding to the Dutch possessions in the East'. The parties then marched from the dais, and the scene changed 'to that "Gem set in a silver sea", Tasmania, the lovely land, the history of which we see enacted today'. The description continued:

> Tasmania was then an unpeopled solitude which had never known the voice of the white man. Here we are introduced to the dusky natives of this unexplored land, seated around their camp fires, enjoying peace and tranquillity in their primitive fashion. Presently in the far distance, "two enormous birds with dark bodies and huge white wings" appear upon the horizon and come

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84 TASMANIAN TOURIST ASSOCIATION, *Annual Report 1908-9.*

85 DAILY POST, 17 November 1908 and COURIER, 12 November 1908.

86 WHITTINGTON, P, 1910; *Official Souvenir of Hobart Historical Pageant;* Davies Bros, Hobart.

> floating landward, with majestic motion and ever enlarging bulk, to the extreme alarm of the terrified natives who after kindling fires by way of warning and alarm to their comrades, depart in terror.

The boatswain of the Heemskerck was given the job of swimming ashore and carving:

> his name in the trunk of a tree, watched the while from a distance by the natives, who, in dumb show, exhibit signs of alarm. Having accomplished his mission he returns to his ship, and the fleet sails away, to the infinite relief of the natives, who testify their joy by **A Grand Corroboree**, fires being lighted in various parts of the country.

The pageant then leaped to the year 1777, when:

> Captain Cook lands on the island ... and holds friendly parley with some of the natives, presenting gifts of food and clothing to them, which, on his departure, they display in an amusing manner.

Passing on to 1803, Bowen was seen to arrive accompanied by a party of convicts, a guard of soldiers and a few free settlers.

> Bowen's party landed and pitched their tents, and proceeded at once to establish a new settlement, which work followed the strains of "God Save the King," the boom of guns, and the hoisting of the British flag. But on Collins' arrival it was deemed advisable to remove the settlement to the spot where Hobart now stands.

This was followed by the final scene, in which: 'Tasmania bec[ame] one of the Australian Sisterhood':

> and welcome[d] the DUKE OF YORK, the grandson of our late beloved QUEEN VICTORIA, and the son of our no less beloved QUEEN ALEXANDRA, together with his charming Princess. This event is fresh in the memory of all, and will no doubt be duly appreciated, as will also the charming allegorical tableau of Australia, in which the Queen of the Commonwealth will be seen surrounded by six beautiful maidens, representing the States of this great and progressive portion of His Majesty's Dominions.[87]

The Pageant lasted 50 minutes and was performed by 250 amateurs under the direction of Mr J H Lyons, who had been expressly brought from South Australia for the task. It concluded with the entire cast parading round the ground and saluting 'his Majesty's representatives'.[88] Even the pro-Labor *Daily Post* found the event a 'spectacle of magnificence ... [which could] fairly be said to have astonished the public by the elaborate scale and truthfulness to detail with which it was

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87 WHITTINGTON, *op. cit.*, 20.

88 DAILY POST, 3 March 1910, p7.

carried out'.[89] The organ of the emerging Labor Party thereby betrayed a conservatism which was later to dog the Tasmanian branch for much of its period in office. Opposition to the jingoism of the Tasmanian establishment came from more radical organs, and – as in the past – from across Bass Strait.

FIGURE 3.3

THE 'QUEEN' SURROUNDED BY 'SIX BEAUTIFUL MAIDENS'

3.3.3 Counter views

Not only was the Tasmanian Tourist Association conservative, its approach was also coloured by the fact that it consciously catered for comparatively well-to-do tourists.[90] When it was argued at a TTA meeting that organised tours could be conducted more cheaply by leaving out the poultry lunches, the Association's secretary agreed that it would indeed be possible, then added 'but you won't get the people to go on the trips. At least not the class of people we want'.[91]

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89 DAILY POST, 21 February 1910, p7.

90 In fact, most interstate tourists before World War I were from the wealthier classes. In 1902, permanent public servants were awarded three weeks holiday per year, but it was not until 1936 that the federal industrial tribunal set a precedent by awarding workers in the printing industry one week's paid leave. While cheap rail fares and accommodation put Tasmania increasingly within the range of the middle and lower middle classes, it was to be some time before the working class were in a position to undertake the trip.

91 DAILY POST, 16 February 1909.

There was, however, a working class in Tasmania, and their interests were briefly taken up by the short-lived paper, the *Clipper*, the primary task of which, according to Lloyd Robson, was 'to foster working-class consciousness'.[92]

Understandably, the centenary celebrations drew the *Clipper*'s ire, which responded subversively by running a "Centenary Quatrain Competition". This paper, however, did give its endorsement to one centenary event; this was Beattie's lecture, *Glimpses of the Lives and Times of the Early Tasmanian Governors*, of which it wrote:

> Beattie has lots of historically interesting material, and uses it to advantage. Rather pleasing to notice that he did not shirk the black spots in our history, but was fair all round, though his denunciations of the treatment of the "free" press in Governor Arthur's time, the tyranny of certain jailers, the woes of the poor devils who in the jail yard 'went up at eight and came down at nine', and the inhuman annihilation of the aborigines, were evidently unpalatable to some lingering remnants of the old regime, who gnashed their gums in the semi darkness of the Town Hall.[93]

For the *Clipper*, the convict past provided political ammunition. By telling the tales of class oppression and brutality which dominated Tasmanian society before 1853, it was believed that feelings of solidarity could be aroused among the workers of the early twentieth century. While it was not Beattie's intention to whip up such sentiments, there were others in the years leading up to World War I by whom Tasmania's early history was fashioned for precisely this end. The most vivid example of such historiography is to be found in the anonymously written *History of Tasmania* which appeared in the radical Melbourne weekly, *Truth*, in 1914, and as a single volume the following year.

The author of the *Truth* history stated his purpose as being 'to tell in a plain way the true story of the bad old days in Van Diemen's Land'.[94] He claimed that the work was 'based on authentic official records in public and private archives', and documentation does indeed exist to suggest that many of the horrors described in this book actually occurred. Although positive features of Van Diemen's Land society – for instance, the fact that some ex-convicts *did* against the odds do quite well[95] – are scarcely admitted, the book gives a vivid impression of the arbitrary and irrational tyranny which prevailed in the early years of the colony. For example:

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92 ROBSON, 1991, *op. cit.*, 226.

93 CLIPPER, 5 March 1904.

94 ANON, 1915; *History of Tasmania*; Truth, Melbourne, preface.

95 In this context, it is interesting to note that W B Propsting, the Tasmanian Premier during 1903 and 1904, was the son of a convict.

> The magistrates, when dealing with prisoners, acted very much as they pleased. One commandant, Colonel Geils, fixed a spiked collar on the neck of a free woman, and had her exhibited in the streets of Hobart Town. Another woman he had tied to the tailboard of a cart and flogged bare-backed in public through the town.... A magistrate tied a carter to the wheel of his wagon and inflicted 300 lashes for cruelty to his bullocks. Dr Mountgarret ... ordered a man to be flogged for presenting his bill. A witness convicted of perjury was condemned to the pillory, and his ears were nailed to the post as an additional punishment.... The mob [then] pelted him with rotten eggs and dirt.... [Etc., etc.].[96]

Thus was Tasmania's history appropriated for a political end by a radical if sensational journalist. His message was easily conveyed to Melbourne's increasingly organised and literate working class. In Tasmania, however, there were no corresponding attempts by the incipient labour movement to capitalise upon the state's history in order to influence political opinion. Rather the trend was to tame the convict past, to render it acceptable. It was profitable, for the state as well as for private individuals, and interest in it seemed unlikely to wane. The solution, therefore, seemed to be to embrace it officially, but only after it had been thoroughly sanitised. This process was carried out most conspicuously at Port Arthur, where, despite a conservative outcry, both the government and the TTA were persuaded to join forces to save the old convict buildings in a way which marked a new step for both historical preservation and historical tourism in Tasmania.

3.4 PORT ARTHUR: SANCTIFICATION BY FIRE

3.4.1 The fires of the 1890s

During the 1890s, the penal buildings at Port Arthur were changed dramatically as a consequence of two devastating fires. The first fire was on 28 January 1895, when a strong wind drove a small bush fire into the settlement. Several houses were burnt, including Government House. Then three major buildings caught: the old Asylum, which had been converted into Carnarvon Town Hall, the Model Prison, which still belonged to the Rev. Woollnough, and the Hospital, owned by the Catholic Church and still awaiting conversion to a college.[97]

The major buildings were covered by insurance, and it was decided by the Town Board and the Catholic Church to rebuild the Town Hall and Hospital respectively. The Hospital was completed by the end of June, but soon it was concluded by the

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96 ANON, 1915, *op. cit.*, 26.

97 MERCURY, 31 January 1895.

locals that the idea of turning it into a college seemed 'to have faded away'.[98] Various complications over the transfer of deeds resulted in a frustrating delay before the new Town Hall could be officially opened. This finally occurred on 26 December 1896, when Rev. Woollnough gave a 'graphic account of its history' to the assembled locals and tourists.[99] His own building next door, the gutted Model Prison, he left to moulder.

FIGURE 3.4

CARNARVON TOWN HALL

The Penitentiary, although it escaped the fire, provided the Carnarvon Town Board with a dilemma. Initially, it was felt that if there were no commercial use to which it could be put, it ought to be pulled down at once. For:

> Visitors will not come from the colonies to see this one remaining relic, but the natural beauties of the place.[100]

In November 1895, the deeds to the Church, the Town Reserve and the Penitentiary were handed over to the Town Board in the form of a 99-year lease, the latter for recreational purposes only.[101] The following August, the 'rapid decay' of this building was obvious. It was felt to be a 'white elephant' and it was regretted that:

> some arrangement [could] not be made to pull it down,... thus remov[ing] from the town what will prove in the summer months

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98 TASMANIAN MAIL, 29 June, 1895, p29.

99 TASMANIAN MAIL, 2 January 1897, p28.

100 TASMANIAN MAIL, 23 March 1895, p28.

101 TASMANIAN MAIL, 16 November 1895, p29.

> an alarming menace in case of fire, for the roof is rotten and so woolly that a chance spark would set it ablaze in a few minutes. This danger ought to be removed before the hot weather sets in, or the neglect may prove very disastrous for the whole place'.[102]

FIGURE 3.5

THE BURNT-OUT MODEL PRISON

This warning was not heeded, and when sparks from a bush fire were blown into Carnarvon on New Year's Day, 1898, it was indeed the Penitentiary roof that was first to catch. It burnt for forty-eight hours and was left roofless and floorless, the ground inside its walls 'being strewn with burned timber, distorted bolts and locks, and pieces of iron, whose late form and use it were hard to tell'. The Police Office, Trenham's boarding house and Rose Cottage were next to burn, then the perfectly restored Hospital caught fire again. When the flames died down only the stone walls remained standing.

The conflagration did not engender unmixed sorrow. The *Mercury* correspondent wrote:

> There are many who will make no concealment of their satisfaction at the destruction of the Penitentiary. On holiday visits to Port Arthur in years gone by you always met the man who "would like to put a limited quantity of dynamite or gunpowder" under the Model and the Penitentiary, and so remove the last trace of the "system" that flourished there fifty years ago.... Thus fate seems determined that Port Arthur should be "wiped out". The name of Carnarvon appears to be an inadequate

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102 TASMANIAN MAIL, 15 August 1896, p28.

> effacement. People now shake their heads and say that the place is "gone"![103]

But even after the fires, tourists continued to visit the Peninsula, and the smoke-stained ruins of the old penal buildings did not cease to provide the major attraction. In February 1896, one year after the fires, visitors were 'flocking down', and Beattie provided an added incentive by awarding Port Arthur the "palm" for beauty.[104] In March 1897, the overland route was proving 'more popular every year',[105] and even burned-out the Model Prison had not lost its appeal. On Boxing Day 1897, the building:

> had a great number of visitors, many of whom descended to the dark cell, closed the door, and admitted it was possible to "see" darkness, and that this was palpable. Others walked up and down the "exercise yard" at the regulation pace, to "see what it was like", and more dropped into the ordinary cells and tried to imagine what "doing time" was like in the Model 40 years ago.[106]

And immediately following the fire of 1898, 600 sight-seers steamed down in the *Manapouri* to inspect the damage.[107] Steamer excursions continued to be popular on public holidays, and many people were left standing on the wharf on Boxing Day 1900. The effects of the fires were noted by this party. The whole of Port Arthur, it appeared, was turning into a ruin, gaining a patina which helped give the site an ancient quality that was not entirely unattractive:

> The Penitentiary is still there, roofless and floorless, and begrimed with smoke. The coral plant creeps on the interior walls, and the fern flourishes where the floors have been. The ruins of the Model Prison are gaining virtue by age. The exercise yards are being covered by green, and the mist of time seems to make the "dark cell" darker than ever. The old hospital is still a heap of ruins, and the Town Hall is the only prominent building that has a look of life and newness about it. Many people urge that the remnant of the old convict establishment at Port Arthur ought to be wiped out. Well, why? If it ought to be, the Tower of London ought to be razed to the ground.[108]

Although there *were* still many locals and visitors who believed that the remnant should be razed, one of the latter, who wished 'to bury [the ruins] in the most

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103 MERCURY, 4 January 1898.

104 TASMANIAN MAIL, 22 February 1896, p25.

105 TASMANIAN MAIL, 6 March 1897, p27.

106 MERCURY, 28 December 1897.

107 MERCURY, 4 January 1898.

108 TASMANIAN MAIL, 29 December 1900. Lowenthal provides many examples of humankind's appreciation of patina and 'pleasing decay' dating from the eighteenth century (*op. cit.*, 155-163).

profound oblivion', put his finger on the main reason for their continued existence: they were simply 'allied to too many pecuniary interests to allow of their being swept out of existence'.[109] Despite the fires, these interests multiplied each year as the settlement's popularity grew.

3.4.2 Business as usual

Although sea cruises to Port Arthur in support of charities continued on public holidays throughout the 1890s and into the first decade of the new century, one gains the impression that increasingly the site was becoming popular with mainland tourists and less so with Tasmanians. It was questioned in 1895 whether more than one in a hundred Hobartians had visited the settlement,[110] and in 1899, a Melbourne visitor found:

> that it [was] the humour of the "aborigines" to know nothing of the locality so intimately connected with the past history of the country. This sensitiveness has been exhibited in the change of the name Port Arthur to Carnarvon, and it is the proper form in good society in the Tasmanian capital to affect absolute ignorance of the place unless you call it by the name of its regenerate christening.[111]

However, it was also claimed two years previously that there were a number of Hobart citizens who 'never [went] anywhere ... except Port Arthur'.[112]

One thing is certain: Port Arthur was becoming increasingly popular. Whitehouse's steamer continued its twice-weekly trips to Taranna, and, after 1893, an overland route from Hobart was also available to the visitor. By taking the 9.00am ferry across the Derwent, it was possible to travel to Sorell by train, and then by coach to Port Arthur, arriving there at 7.00pm.[113] As soon as they opened their Agency,

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109 MERCURY, 13 November 1913; letter from Henry Gullet of Sydney.

110 TASMANIAN MAIL, 9 November 1895, p34.

111 "NUMQUAM DORMIO", 1899; *My Trip through Tasmania;* Melbourne, 27.

112 MERCURY, 28 December 1897.

113 An extension of the railway from Sorell to Port Arthur was advocated by Woollnough in his maiden speech to parliament. He argued: 'Any advanced politician could have seen that if the Sorell railway had been continued to Port Arthur, it would have become a paying line; and it must be obvious that had railway communications been established the numbers would have greatly increased, and the whole of the Peninsula thrown into the traffic.' Cabinet did not consider the suggestion, however (TASMANIAN MAIL, 6 May 1893, p28).

Cook & Sons offered a combination land and sea tour which they claimed offered the best chance of seeing as much as possible in a limited time.[114]

In 1902 tourism to Port Arthur declined briefly, because, it was conjectured, of 'the destruction of the buildings and the obliteration of some of the more gruesome items connected with "man's inhumanity to man"'.[115] But by 1905, the stream of visitors had evidently increased again, for Whitehouse Bros expanded their steamer service from two to three voyages per week.[116] Two years later, the Tasmanian Tourist Association began to organise both overland and steamer excursions to the Port.[117] By 1908, the overland route had been improved sufficiently to take motor vehicles,[118] and by 1910 as many as five or six cars per days travelled to Port Arthur.[119]

In 1912, the road was used twice weekly by Webster, Rometch and Duncan's motor-bus; and the tri-weekly steamer from Hobart began sailing to Nubeena rather than to Taranna, thus making use of the Wedge Bay Road, which had been completed as long ago as 1894.[120] In 1913, the bus service was increased to tri-weekly and brought a large number of passengers.[121] The following year, bus trips to Port Arthur were provided every day except Saturday. Passengers caught the 9.15am ferry across the Derwent, boarded the cumbersome open-top coach at 10am and arrived in Port Arthur at 5pm. As soon as they arrived, 'most of the tourists went to visit the ruins'.[122] Also in 1914, it was 'quite a common thing to see 10 or 15 motor-cars, as well as the large bus', pass through to Port Arthur during the day.

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114 ANON, 1894, *op. cit.*, 99.

115 ARGUS, 8 February 1902. The Government's *Handbook of Tasmania* concurred that the majority of visitors were attracted by 'grim memories of a past which forms an unpleasant chapter in the history of Tasmania' rather than by the Peninsula's natural attractions (GOVERNMENT OF TASMANIA, 1908, *op. cit.*, 88).

116 TASMANIAN TOURIST ASSOCIATION, 1905, *op. cit.*, 29.

117 A three-day overland excursion was organised between 26 February and 1 March 1907. Twenty passengers travelled by 5-horse brake (Unidentified newspaper, Hortin Bequest, Royal Society Archive, RS6). A party of 53 travelled to Port Arthur by sea for a TTA organised day trip in January 1909 (DAILY POST, 16 January 1909).

118 CRITIC, 20 August 1907; letter from Dobson hoping that the road would be suitable for motor traffic in the coming season.

119 JPP 1910/22; *Department of Lands and Survey Report for 1910*, 25.

120 JPP 1912/20; *Department of Lands and Survey Report for 1911*, 15.

121 JPP 1913/17; *Department of Lands and Survey Report for 1912*, 18.

122 MOORHOUSE, H M, 1986; Tourist Trips – Circa 1914, *Tasmanian Peninsula Chronicle* **1**, 25-26.

There is no way of determining tourist numbers at this time with any accuracy, but in 1912 one local councillor estimated that 5,000 people visited the town.[123]

Interpretation of the site during this period was at first provided by the elderly ex-convict guides. One of these, William Thompson, wore a convict uniform which owed more to imagination than to faithful reconstruction. The same could probably be said for some of the stories with which tourists were regaled. A visitor from Ceylon was shown around the settlement by an elderly ex-convict in 1900, and had pointed out to her the cliff on Point Puer 'from which several boy convicts had committed suicide, to escape the cruel torture they were subjected to'.[124]

FIGURE 3.6

WILLIAM THOMPSON

This guide also claimed to have been married four times despite having served twenty four years in gaol. His back, it was said, still carried the marks of the lash. So too did the back of Harry Winter, who lived in a shack near the Blowhole. When visitors were taken there, he would offer to remove his shirt and show off his scars at 1/- a time. It was believed that 'he did quite well'.[125] Another guide recounted

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123 PWD 5/40 Tasman: North to Minister for Lands, 1 July 1913.

124 CEYLON OBSERVER, 31 August 1900.

125 NUROO, U, 1988; Nuroos of Lufra, *Tasmanian Peninsula Chronicle* **4**, 43-44.

'man's inhumanity to man' in a way 'calculated to give the most hardened a shudder'.[126]

By 1910, the aging ex-convict guides were gradually being succeeded by others, one of the first of whom was Alf Maule. He was the son of Joseph Maule, who had been the storekeeper at Port Arthur and for over twenty years an employee of the Convict Department.[127] In his early years as a guide, Maule was accompanied by Harry Winter, then in his seventies, who was 'somewhat garrulous about his former exploits'.[128] Maule himself, though, was not tainted with a convict past. Neither was James MacArthur, who was Maule's fellow guide in 1914.[129] This pair was far less of an embarrassment to the authorities than the "old hands" they had replaced. Shortly, this was to be a factor in determining the fate of the old penal site, the physical condition of which each year called out more loudly for action.

3.4.3 Towards preservation

Just as it was Port Arthur's appeal as a tourist attraction which was to drive the development and management of historical tourism in Tasmania, so it was the appeal of the settlement's ruined Church which was to drive the development and management of the site itself.

3.4.3.1 The Church

Mainly for aesthetic reasons, Port Arthur's Church had an appeal broad enough to overcome the resistance of many who deplored the promotion of the rest of the site. Not surprisingly, concern was voiced for the preservation of this building before any other in Port Arthur.

In 1908, the Tasmanian Tourist Association was provided with an unsolicited report on the Church written by the celebrated Tasmanian church architect, Alexander North.[130] North had recently visited the United Kingdom and had been

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126 TASMANIAN MAIL, 9 November 1895, p34.

127 MACFIE, 1989, *op. cit.*

128 DAILY POST, 8 December 1909.

129 James MacArthur was in fact the servant whose 'foolhardy' action led to the fire which burned out Port Arthur Church in February 1884 (MERCURY, 4 March 1884). It is interesting to speculate on how his involvement in the making of this "ruin" might have affected his commentary on it.

130 PWD 5/40/Tasman: North to Secretary, 7 April 1913. North was thought to have an unrivalled knowledge of Gothic architecture. He designed many churches, particularly in the north of Tasmania, but also

impressed with the care which he saw bestowed on old buildings. He felt that the Port Arthur Church was in desperate need of similar care. His report informed the Tourist Association that the key stone which supported an arch in one of the walls was crumbling and on the point of giving way. The Association's Secretary accordingly asked Woollnough, a member of the Town Board, to vest the building in the Association 'with a view to carrying out absolutely necessary repairs'.[131] The request was refused. A few months later, the TTA offered 'to fence, to level and improve the floor, to put the place in order and provide a collecting box'. Again, the offer was declined, 'possibly from a feeling in the municipality that it was their job to do it'.[132] However, nothing was done, and the Tourist Association feared that the Church would 'fall completely into ruins'.[133] Five years later, the District Surveyor reported that the ruins were 'in a very dangerous state, and want either pulling down or strengthening'. He added: 'as they seem to be valuable assets, I should suggest the latter course'.[134]

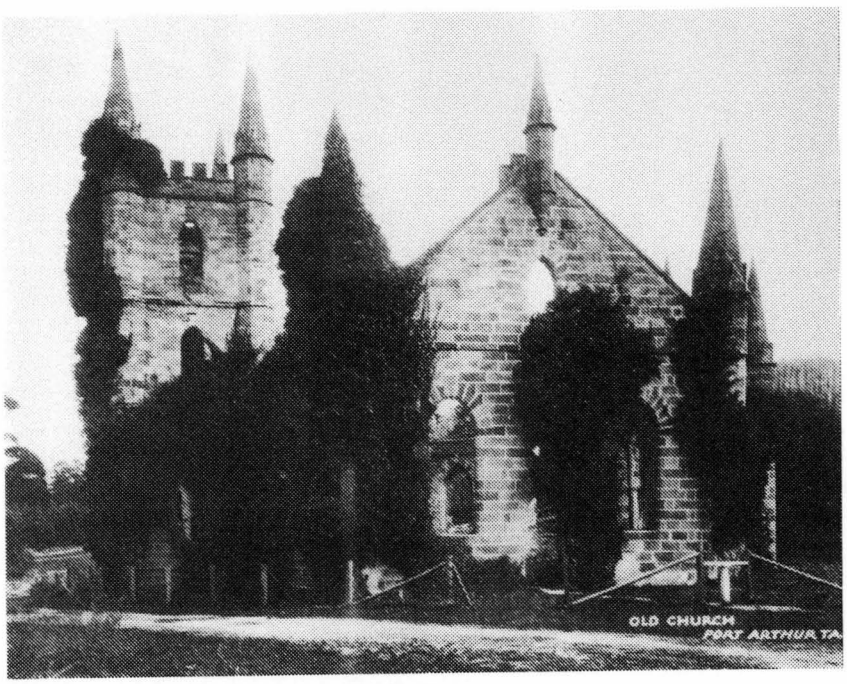

FIGURE 3.7

PORT ARTHUR CHURCH

Those who wished the Church preserved were fortunate that the Minister for Lands at the time was Edward Mulcahy, who, since the mid-1890s, had acted as the chief

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in Bothwell and other country towns. His work is described in MAIDMENT, J, 1982; Alexander North and His Work in Tasmania, *National Trust Newsletter December 1982*, 1-2.

131 DAILY POST, 20 October 1908.

132 DAILY POST, 11 January, 1909.

133 TASMANIAN TOURIST ASSOCIATION, *Annual Report 1908-9.*

134 JPP 1913/17; *Department of Lands and Survey Report for 1912-13*, 18.

organiser of the bank holiday steamer excursions to Port Arthur in support of St Joseph's Orphanage and other charities. In July 1912, he called for a report detailing the costs that would be involved in repairing the building so as to prevent it from falling. The Clerk of Works estimated £190, which his senior officer, the Inspector of Public Buildings, considered 'a waste of money – except from a sentimental point of view and as an attraction for Tourists'. In spite of this negative recommendation, Mulcahy contacted Alexander North and requested a copy of the report he had written several years earlier. This report could not be found, so Mulcahy asked North to make a fresh inspection in conjunction with an officer from the Public Works Department, Mr Bucirde. They sailed from Hobart in June 1913 accompanied by J Moore-Robinson, Secretary of the TTA.[135]

The Tourist Association had become involved after Moore-Robinson wrote to Mulcahy in March putting forward a proposal for the future management of the Port Arthur ruins. This advocated the cancellation of Tasman Municipality's 99-year lease on the Church and Penitentiary, and its reissue to the Association. The Church was to be made safe and used as 'a museum of the early days'. It was thought that Mr Williamson's "Old Curiosity Shop" might be used as a basis for the collection, with Williamson himself hired as a caretaker and a charge of 6d or 1/- made for admission. Moore-Robinson stated that:

> It is, without doubt, an essential of the near future that some definite and national step will have to be undertaken in regard to the Port Arthur Settlement.[136]

Although the Minister deferred a decision on this proposal, it is likely that the Tourist Association's observations contributed towards the zeal with which he now tackled the problem. Reports from Bucirde and North were received at the beginning of July 1913, and were broadly in agreement. They found the Church to be in a generally good state of preservation. Some rebuilding of one wall was considered necessary and reinforced concrete was recommended to prevent the walls from falling at the gable ends.[137] The cost was estimated at £250, and North had no doubts about the worth of the project:

> The ruined church is unique, so far as Australia is concerned, and future generations will not fail to thank those who have had the foresight to preserve this picturesque and interesting relic. The thousands of tourists who visit Port Arthur annually bear testimony to the fact that the church is the central feature of their

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135 PWD 5/40/Tasman: Mulcahy to Secretary, 5 July 1912; Clerk to Inspector of Works, 12 September 1912; Inspector to Secretary of Works, 6 November 1912; Secretary to North, 3 April 1913.

136 PWD 5/40/Tasman: Moore-Robinson to Mulcahy, 8 March 1913.

137 PWD 5/40/Tasman: Bucirde to Secretary of Public Works, 2 July 1913.

> visit, and none fail to be enchanted with its solemn dignity, and genuine beauty. Without the church, Port Arthur would undoubtedly lose its attractiveness, and the State would be deprived of an asset which yearly increases in value.[138]

However, both men were far less impressed with arguments for spending the £200 which they believed it would cost to preserve the ruins of the Penitentiary.

3.4.3.2 The Penitentiary

Bucirde believed that the Penitentiary had 'no artistic value to warrant such an amount [as £200] being spent on it.' He thought that if it were pulled down, the improved view of the bay would more than compensate for its loss. While concurring on the Penitentiary's lack of artistic value, North accepted that 'to some people it may be of interest as illustrating the methods of prison discipline in convict times'. Swayed by the Tasman Councillors' anxiety to preserve and retain the building, he advocated offering it to the council on the condition that they undertake to preserve and strengthen it to the satisfaction of the Department, and to knock down and remove the unsafe portions. This proposal, however, cut across the council's own wishes at that time as a result of a curious combination of circumstances.

Demolition of the unsafe parts of the Penitentiary was high on the council's priorities, because they feared it to be only a matter of time before a visitor to the ruin was killed. This was a reasonable fear, for, according to the *Mercury*, every season after the Penitentiary was destroyed by fire, tourists:

> risk[ed] their lives by poking about among the fallen bricks to inspect the old cells or ovens or whatever else can be identified in this most unprepossessing heap of rubbish.[139]

The council hoped that the cost of demolition would be covered by the sale of the thousands of bricks which littered the floor of the building. A request from a Carnarvon committee to purchase the bricks for the purpose of constructing a new church was looked at favourably by the council, which added the proviso that others should be allowed to purchase them on the same terms.[140] These terms, however, could only be fixed by the state government since the building was state property. Aware of this, Woollnough, who was a member of the church committee,

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138 PWD 5/40/Tasman: North to Mulcahy, 1 July 1913.

139 MERCURY, 13 November 1913; *Editorial.*

140 PWD 5/40/Tasman: Warden of Tasman Municipality to Secretary for Public Works, 7 December 1912. In fact, the foundation stone of St David's Anglican Church was laid adjacent to the old Church on 11 May 1927. Ironically, St David's was built of weatherboard, not stone (MERCURY, 26 July 1937).

wrote to his old parliamentary colleague, Mulcahy, requesting the bricks for the nominal sum of 1/- per thousand.[141] Mulcahy agreed, and, by doing so, put the council in a quandary.

Because of its earlier decision, the council was now bound to sell the bricks to all-comers for 1/- per thousand. And this, it knew, would not raise sufficient money to cover the cost of demolition.[142] Therefore, on 2 July 1913, ironically on the same day that North submitted his report advocating that the Penitentiary be offered to the council, the Tasman Warden wrote to the Secretary of Lands stating that the council had agreed that the upkeep and control of the Church and Penitentiary was a national and not a local issue, and that it would be happy for the buildings to be taken over by the state.[143] Faced with this impasse, Mulcahy wrote to North in August advising that he would recommend to cabinet the expenditure of £300 on the Church and the pulling down of the Penitentiary.[144] He advised the Engineer-in-Chief, T W Fowler, accordingly.

Fowler had twice visited Port Arthur, and believed that all the old ruins should be restored to government control and preserved, regarding them as valuable assets in fostering tourism. He recommended strongly against the demolition of the Penitentiary.[145] Mulcahy obligingly deferred a decision, and, while he deliberated, the *Mercury* made known its views on the matter. Prompted by a letter from Henry Gullett on 13 November,[146] the sub-editorial opined that:

> the large rambling ruin of the Penitentiary, a relic of that very worst style of British architecture which gave the Old Country the most hideous factories that Lancashire or Yorkshire ever possessed, should be razed and cleared away entirely and its site used for some edifice of more aesthetic appearance, and pleasanter associations.[147]

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141 PWD 5/40/Tasman: Secretary of Works to Woollnough, 4 January 1913.

142 PWD 5/40/Tasman: Warden to Secretary for Lands, 5 April 1913.

143 PWD 5/40/Tasman: Warden to Secretary for Lands, 2 July 1913.

144 PWD 5/40/Tasman: Mulcahy to North, 18 August 1913.

145 PWD 5/40/Tasman: Fowler to Mulcahy, 26 August 1913.

146 'I do not think I am alone in the experience that I have been prevented from visiting what is described as one of the most delightful spots in Tasmania from the unwillingness to come into contact with objects and scenes which to all capable of adequately appreciating them and their associations can only evoke suggestions of the direst acts of criminality and the most cruel forms of restraint and punishment of a kind which every humane or sensitive mind would wish to efface from remembrance, and to bury in the most profound oblivion.' (MERCURY, 13 November 1913; letter from Henry Gullett)

147 MERCURY, 13 November 1913; *A Blot on the Landscape.*

Enlisting the support of Dickens, Spinoza, Longfellow and Schiller, the writer deprecated the preservation of relics that 'kept alive the recollection of deeds and conditions that are better forgotten'. Instead, he advocated:

> In Tasmania, in Australia generally, we need memorials and reminders that are cheerful and inspiring, not depressing, humiliating, saddening.... [I]f there is aught in the relics of bye-gones that depresses and pains us to recall, we can make matters better for those that come after us by passing on to them a world from which as many as possible of these painful influences has been expunged.... Supposing the old times were bad; supposing the old mistaken law-givers and judges sent here people often more sinned against than sinning ... guilty and innocent alike, and sometimes by their harsh treatment drove them to suicide or the madhouse – what does all this matter today? Men rise on stepping stones of their dead selves, and need not have those ugly corpses hung round their necks or sitting at their tables.

Mulcahy, unlike his predecessor, Pillinger, was unimpressed with such rhetoric. The day after the *Mercury* article appeared, he wrote a memorandum confirming that the decision had been taken to resume the buildings and retain some portion of the Penitentiary because of its 'considerable attraction to the majority of tourists'.[148] The following month, Fowler visited Port Arthur, and drew up a series of recommendations for the management of the site.

3.4.3.3 Management

Fowler did not believe that it was necessary to knock down any part of the Penitentiary, but advised a strict policing of tourists. This required the official appointment of the two guides currently working the site. Fortunately, this pair, Joseph Maule and James MacArthur, were not from a convict background. They alone would be provided with keys to the building, which would be cleared of debris and locked. Parties of no more than twelve would be allowed in the building in the company of a guide. Notices would be erected advising that vandals would be prosecuted, and the guides would 'actively assist in preventing the destruction of the ruins, and in securing the conviction of any persons attempting to damage them'.[149]

Fowler also believed that the government should resume the Model Prison ruin and clear it of debris. He was also concerned about vandalism on Dead Island, and recommended that no visits there be allowed except in the company of a guide.[150]

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148 PWD 5/40/Tasman: Secretary of Lands, Memo, 14 November 1913.

149 PWD 5/40/Tasman: Fowler to Mulcahy, 10 December 1913.

150 During 1913, 'wanton destruction' was reported to the tombstones of Dead Island. Speaking at a Tourist Association meeting, J Beattie said that if things were allowed to go on in this direction, it would not be

He estimated that £100 would be adequate for the preparation of the Penitentiary and the Model Prison, and suggested a charge of 6d per head for guided tours of the Penitentiary and 1/- for the whole site. He thought an annual grant of £25 would be adequate for general upkeep, and suggested that control be vested in the Public Works Department. Even the *Mercury* conceded that Fowler's recommendations were 'sensible and practical enough' if the ruins were retained. However, it held to its view that it would be far better for the state if the Penitentiary ruins were to be demolished and 'the materials used for some other edifice more worthy of the site'.[151]

The resumption of the Church and Penitentiary by the state government was announced in 1914, and repairs to the Church were completed by June. Ironically however, although the strategy advocated by North helped to keep the building erect, his suggested use of reinforced concrete caused further damage over the years.[152] One of North's recommendations which was not followed was to cut back the ivy that grew copiously over the Church. Fowler advised against this because 'it undoubtedly add[ed] to the picturesqueness of the ruin'.[153] The ivy, whatever its aesthetic appeal, also affected the stonework adversely.

In fact, most of Fowler's recommendations were followed. Maule and MacArthur were appointed as Port Arthur's first two official guides, and were so punctilious in performing their duty of care that complaints were made against them by those locals who felt their rights to be infringed.[154] Debris was cleared from the Penitentiary, essentially by the sale of bricks, which were applied for from several parts of the Peninsula. Those removing bricks were also required to dispose of the other rubbish that was mixed up with them, and although this required a certain amount of policing, it gradually resulted in the clearing of the site.[155]

The initiative taken in respect of the Port Arthur site represented the first attempt by a Tasmanian government to preserve a historic place. It was taken primarily because of the site's importance as a tourist attraction. Meanwhile other historic

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long before there were no tombstones worth looking at (MERCURY, 18 November 1913).

151 MERCURY, 23 December 1913.

152 MACFIE, 1988, *op. cit.*

153 PWD 5/40/Tasman: Fowler to Mulcahy, 26 August 1913.

154 PWD 5/40/Tasman: Tayst to Secretary for Lands, 14 July 1914.

155 Guide MacArthur complained that the church committee working bees were somewhat remiss in this regard (PWD 5/40/Tasman: MacArthur to Engineer, 11 April 1915).

relics which lacked such obvious touristic appeal were being lost, their significance unrecognised. Among these were relics which related to the Aborigines.

3.5 ABORIGINES: 'NO HEAD-STONE OR MONUMENT'

In 1896, the *Tasmanian Mail* wrote with a certain sense of satisfaction: 'Old relics of the Black War are fast being swept away'.[156] The particular relic which occasioned the observation was the large house in Elizabeth Street in which Robinson accommodated the Blacks he had rounded up in the 1830s. It had also served as Truganini's final home. Now, like so many other old Hobart buildings, it was 'bowing its head to up-to-date alteration and architecture'. The other building on mainland Tasmania to be associated with Aborigines, the Oyster Cove probation station, was also demolished by 1896. Only the ruins of the section used by the medical officer were left. According to the *Tasmanian Mail*:

> It [was] sad to remember that no head-stone or monument [was there] to mark the resting-place or to show to future generations that such a race did exist, and that a large number of them [were] buried [there].[157]

Reference to this site occurred in *Handbook of Tasmania* (1908) and *Tasmania for the Tourist* (1912), so it may be assumed that it remained on the tourist itinerary if merely as a minor attraction.[158] Not so Wybalenna, however, which continued to be neglected, although J E C Lord, in a 1908 report on the Furneaux Islands, stated that he believed they would 'ere long, become a popular tourist resort and sanatorium'.[159]

The bulk of Lord's report was on the islanders themselves, 190 people of Tasmanian Aboriginal descent. In describing the living conditions of this small group of the dispossessed, Lord painted a dismal picture of dirt, overcrowding and hunger. Among his recommendations for their welfare was that they 'should be strictly governed as an inferior race'.

In general, the literature of the Tasmanian Tourist Association avoided mention of the Aborigines, although A J Taylor, in *Beautiful Tasmania* (1912), had this to say:

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156 TASMANIAN MAIL, 22 August 1896, p17.

157 TASMANIAN MAIL, 18 April 1896, p24.

158 GOVERNMENT OF TASMANIA, 1908, *op. cit.*, 72 and TASMANIAN TOURIST ASSOCIATION, 1912, *op. cit.*, 42.

159 JPP 1908/57.

> [In] its aboriginal inhabitants, Tasmania had a race living in the true Stone Age, and too innocent of the arts of civilisation to know how to point a spear with bone, or to put a handle to the chipped flints which they used as cutting tools. The last member of this race died in the year 1877. To-day the land of the black man is covered from north to south and from east to west with busy cities and smiling townships and stations.[160]

The impression conveyed was that the race simply lacked the skills necessary for survival. That they left descendants went unremarked. Typically, it was left to Beattie to publicise that fact. This he did in a lecture delivered in 1911 to the Royal Society, and subsequently made available to a wider audience through the columns of the Launceston *Examiner* and *Weekly Courier*. As always, Beattie presented a balanced and detailed account, his paper concluding with a quotation from the early Tasmanian Surveyor-General, James Erskine Calder:

> Whatever the future historian of Tasmania may have to say of this ancient people, he will do them an injustice if he fails to record that, as a body, they held their ground bravely for 30 years against the invaders of their beautiful domain.[161]

Generally, however, the only broad interest in Aborigines was in their artefacts and skeletal remains. This interest intensified. More graves, including the unmarked graves at Oyster Cove, were raided.[162] Collections grew in both number and size, and prices rose. Several private individuals, including A J Taylor, built up 'ethnological collections',[163] but the largest collection was that of the Tasmanian Museum. This collection also attracted considerable interest from tourists,[164] but its development was bedevilled, like all other aspects of the Museum, by lack of funds.

Although physically the Tasmanian Museum had expanded from its original two rooms to nine by 1903, the government endowment remained at £500 per year,[165] and it was not until 1916 that this sum was increased by a further £100.[166] This lack of money prevented the preparation for display of certain important exhibits; Truganini's skeleton, for example, remained in storage until 1904, when the director of the National Museum of Victoria lent assistance by permitting the articulator on

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160 TASMANIAN TOURIST ASSOCIATION, 1912, *op. cit.*, 8.

161 Beattie Papers, Royal Society Archive, RS29/22.

162 *Ibid.*

163 JPP 1923/8.

164 By 1905, visitors to the museum averaged 200 on weekdays and 500 on Sundays (JPP 1905/40).

165 JPP 1903/20.

166 JPP 1916/70.

his staff to clean and mount it for display in a specially made glass case.[167] In 1914, Aboriginal skulls were also known to be leaving the state, simply because the museum could not afford to acquire them.[168]

FIGURE 3.8

TRUGANINI'S SKELETON

If it could have been demonstrated to the government that the acquisition and display of this skeletal material attracted tourists who put money into the state's coffers, then money might have been provided for the purpose. But, since entry to the Museum was free, no such demonstration was possible, and no additional money was provided. The contention that the material belonged to the state and was part of its people's heritage appears not to have been considered, any more than were any ethical considerations associated with the collection of human remains. For many Tasmanians, Longfellow's line, 'Let the dead past bury its dead', suggested a proper response to the island's past; in certain circumstances, however, exhumation seems to have been found equally apt.

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167 JPP 1905/40.

168 JPP 1914/46 and JPP 1916/70. The trustees found it 'regrettable that in this manner Tasmania [was] losing valuable specimens which [were] being acquired by institutions beyond the state'.

3.6 SUMMARY

Federation, the Boer War and the centenary combined to teach Tasmanians that they were not merely displaced Britons, but part of a new nation, admittedly British racially and politically – yet distinct. In a way, they felt they had come of age. What they lacked, however, was a "past" which emphasised their distinctiveness as Tasmanians, affirmed their loyalty as Britons, and avoided the unpalatable episodes – episodes which in fact had made the present possible.

In many ways, Risdon symbolised their dilemma. As the state's birthplace, it could not be ignored. A way had to be found, therefore, in which Tasmanians could embrace it. The centenary forced an acknowledgment of the site upon the state, but the festivities dodged the issue. They were simply a five-day celebration of the present which happened to take place at Risdon. Once the plaque had been unveiled, the government's financial commitment was ended and the site could once more be neglected. It could revert to its status of minor (and unkempt) tourist attraction.

The next opportunity for public interpretation of the Risdon period occurred in 1910 during the TTA's Historical Pageant. This was only one aspect of the fortnight-long carnival which was devised essentially to raise the profile of the Association and to strike a blow for Hobart.[169] Athletics and 'the finest rowing race to be seen in Australia' were to be amongst its features, but the pageant was central, being a 'thing new to Australia', and not having been attempted by the other states.[170] Historical pageants were common in England by the early twentieth century, and the importation of the idea is not surprising. Once it had been accepted by the TTA's executive, however, the old dilemma asserted itself again. How could the pageant present Tasmania's past in an acceptable, indeed in an affirmative, way?

The Risdon experience clearly had to be included, but then what? The convict years and the Black War could not be shown. Since independence, only the years of the mineral boom were worthy of note, but this topic hardly lent itself to pageantry. Hence the decision was taken to skip to Federation. Here, Tasmania could be presented as an equal with all the other Australian states. But this scenario would result in a very short show. So the decision, it seems, was taken to devote the bulk

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169 'It was a stroke of genius. It was precisely the idea they had all been waiting for. They wanted a bold stroke, and the carnival was just the idea that was needed.' (TASMANIAN TOURIST ASSOCIATION, *Annual Report 1908-9*; speech by Henry Dobson.)

170 TASMANIAN TOURIST ASSOCIATION, *Annual Report 1908-9.*

of the spectacle to the landfalls of Tasman and Cook, as though these events were links in a continuous chain leading to the present. Indeed, in this view of the past, they were. For what they represented was the skill and courage of the European, the primitive nature of the Aborigine and the inevitability of the usurpation which followed, details mercifully avoided. By contrast, it may be noted that Van Diemen, Governor of the Dutch East Indies, was shown as being feted by the natives of that land; clearly, they understood the proper role required of an "inferior race" in a colonised nation.

What the pageant provided for Tasmanians, and thousands flocked from the country to see it alongside the numerous visitors from interstate,[171] was a biased version of history. In Plumb's terms, it sanctioned the authority and status of the rulers, from Van Diemen down to the present British Royal Family, and it confirmed a destiny made inevitable from the moment Tasman's boatswain nailed the Dutch flag to a Tasmanian tree. For its audience, it provided, in Lowenthal's terms, 'reaffirmation and validation' and 'individual and group identity'.

The pageant was ideologically driven, but it cost the TTA an unpayable debt of £1,000. Tellingly, the money ventured was not from private sources; neither did a pragmatic government invest in the project. An awareness of the vagaries of market forces kept cautious investors away.

Both private investors and government would doubtless have been keen to put their money into such projects if convinced that they would succeed. Increasingly, however, they were persuaded that the aspects of the past which had the potential to make money were those which they would prefer kept from attention. Private speculators who overcame their resistance to exploiting the convict past between 1890 and 1914 include the Rev. Woollnough, who was persuaded to exploit the Model Prison, Union Steamships, which took out a lease on Settlement Island, and Walch's, which reissued *The Broad Arrow*. But the most decisive change of heart over this period was that of the government over Port Arthur. It was not prepared to spend one penny to preserve decaying historical structures of much greater ideological acceptability; the monuments to two former governors which were 'fast tumbling to pieces'[172] and the Lady Franklin Museum, which according to Beatty, was 'going to utter ruin' in 1907,[173] for example, were all left to rot. Even Risdon was abandoned once the centenary ceremony was over. Only Port Arthur had convinced a reluctant government and an even more reluctant upper house that it

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171 DAILY POST, 14 February 1910 and 19 February 1910.

172 See page 129 above.

173 MERCURY, 22 October 1907.

had the potential to make money for the state. Once the government resumed the key Port Arthur properties and spent money on them, it set a precedent which challenged Tasmanians to reconsider their relationship with their island's past and its material traces.

CHAPTER 4: TREADING WATER, 1914 TO 1934

4.1 POLITICS AND TOURISM

The period 1914 to 1934 saw the Australian Labor Party form two governments in Tasmania, the Earle government from 1914 to 1916 and the Lyons government, 1923 to 1928.[1] The conservative parties had combined as a single party in 1909, and this simplified the political structure of Tasmania to a two-party state.[2] However, there was little to distinguish between the record of the two parties when they were in power.

The Earle government was kept in office by the vote of a conservative renegade, and Earle himself was politically moderate and a supporter of conscription. On losing power in 1916, he resigned acrimoniously from his party.[3] Lyons also led a minority government between 1923 and 1925, and could do little more than administer the state and endeavour to rein in the enormous deficit which had been accrued by the previous administration.[4] Lyons himself drifted further to the political right during this period of office, and at the 1925 election his party campaigned under the slogan, 'For God, King and Country'.[5] Although Labor won its first majority of seats in the lower house in this election, Lyons continued to pursue a moderate course, until, in 1929, he lost government to the Liberals who stayed in power until 1934.

Economically, this period was disastrous for Tasmania. Barely was the war over when world commodity prices collapsed in 1921. The farming and mineral industries were hardest hit. The Liberal government chose to finance its programs by unwise borrowings, which forced the Lyons administration which followed in 1923 to adopt a policy of stringency, much as Braddon had done in the 1890s. Tasmania was also a victim of the federal *Navigation Act 1920*, which forced up freight costs and reduced the volume of shipping to the state. Although the

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1 John Earle was also appointed caretaker Premier for one week in 1909.

2 This is a slight oversimplification, for the Liberal Party, as the new party of 1909 was called, renamed itself the "Nationalist Party" in 1919, and in 1922 a small Country Party emerged, which entered into a coalition with the Nationalists to form a government which lasted for one year.

3 DAVIS, R, 1983; *Eighty Year's Labor*; Sassafras Books and the History Department, University of Tasmania, Hobart, 10. Richard Davis' book has been drawn on to a considerable extent in the brief history of the Tasmanian Parliamentary Labor Party which follows.

4 The deficit was £298,000, the largest ever to be accumulated in a single year since 1856 (ROBSON, 1991, *op. cit.*, 394).

5 *Ibid.*, 403.

prejudicial clauses in this Act were eased in July 1925, Tasmania continued to suffer from its effects and from the maritime strikes which occurred annually from 1917 to 1929, with only one strike-free year during the period. Federal tariff barriers also affected Tasmania adversely. Then in 1929 came the Great Depression.

Tasmanians responded to the adverse economic conditions much as they had in the 1870s. The young left the state to the extent that its population once again went into decline, and the prospect of annexation by Victoria was again raised.[6] Paradoxically, secessionist sentiment was also high during the period.

The only forward-looking response of government to Tasmania's problems was in the development of the state's policy of hydro-industrialisation. Tasmanian hydro-electricity first became state property when the Earle government bought out the Hydro-Electric Power and Metallurgical Company in October 1914, six months after assuming office.[7] In 1916, the Great Lake scheme and Waddamana Power Station were opened, and received substantial injections of capital from Nationalist governments during the early 1920s. Initially, hydro-electricity was intended to supply large blocks of power to Tasmania's primary industries; later, Joe Lyons spelled out what was subsequently to become Tasmania's policy of hydro-industrialisation:

> All the hydro-electric power available could be used by transplanting factories from the Old Country to the new, and bringing out people to work them.[8]

Cheap hydro-electricity was subsequently used to attract secondary industries to Tasmania, and was expected to become the cornerstone in the state's economic revival, much as the mining industry had been forty years before. Conscious of its own strategic importance, the Hydro-Electric Department recommended in its 1928 annual report that it be constituted as a Commission with independence from direct political control, and in January 1930, the *Hydro-Electric Commission Act* became law. Thereafter, the HEC played a substantial role not only in the state's economy, but also in determining the image of itself which Tasmania presented to the world.

The other industry to establish itself as an integral factor in Tasmania's economy during this period was tourism. This was brought under state control by the Earle government in 1914. Labor had not been a strong supporter of tourism while in

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6 ROBSON, 1991, *op. cit.*, 395.

7 *Ibid.*, 298 and THOMPSON, P, 1981; *Power in Tasmania*; Australian Conservation Foundation, Hawthorn, Victoria, 15.

8 DAVIS, *op. cit.*, 18.

opposition,[9] but was persuaded by the Railways Department that control of the industry would increase its traffic.

The Government Tourist and Information Bureau was consequently set up as a branch of Railways with E T Emmett, a senior clerk who had worked with the Department since its inception, as its first director. The business scope offered to the Bureau was exceedingly broad,[10] but in reality, for the first few years of its existence, about half its annual vote was spent on publicity.[11] Emmett was essentially an outdoor man, a bushwalker, cyclist and skier, and it was Tasmania's natural and recreational attractions which he was keenest to promote. He was able to claim immediate success for his policy. In 1915, the Melbourne office receipts were £854 compared with £268 for the year in which the office opened, and in Hobart the bureau took £1,037 of railway bookings compared with £339 for the last year in which it was operated by the Tasmanian Tourist Association.[12] The following year, this figure was £1,684, despite the war and a coal strike.[13] By 1919, new bureaux had been opened in Sydney and Adelaide, and agencies in Perth and Brisbane, the latter being converted to a full bureau in 1921.[14] Each year, it was claimed, tourist numbers climbed despite the shipping strikes.[15]

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9 Labor had no desire to back the voluntary Tasmanian Tourist Association, because it feared (quite justifiably) that this organisation would direct visitors away from the state-owned railways to the privately-owned car and bus companies. Neither did it believe at first that the industry should be managed by a state department, feeling that the needs of back country settlers should be given prior consideration (MOSLEY, *op. cit.*, 28).

10 This was spelled out in *The Tourist Bureau Act 1917* (8 Georgii V No 54). The Commissioner for Railways was empowered (with ministerial consent) to 'carry on ... a general tourist business on behalf of the State,... to make all such appointments, enter into all such contracts, establish or equip such branch or other offices and agencies in the State or elsewhere ... and provide and maintain such facilities and conveniences for tourists, as the Commissioner thinks proper or expedient; and generally the Commissioner may do and carry out any matter or thing which in his opinion may promote, further, or facilitate tourist traffic to or in this State, or be of service to tourists.'

11 MOSLEY, *op. cit.*, 39 n74.

12 JPP 1915/44.

13 JPP 1917/20.

14 JPP 1919/51, JPP 1920/60 and JPP 1921/51.

15 Figures published in the WORLD, 15 June 1921, demonstrate the burgeoning activity of the Tourist Bureau in its early years:

Year	Gross Receipts
1914-15	£4,260
1915-16	£9,880
1916-17	£10,723
1917-18	£19,521

But by 1921, the economy had well and truly turned, and the Labor opposition was questioning the Bureau's value. It did not believe it was responsible for bringing a single extra tourist to Tasmania, and considered that Emmett was paid far too high a salary. The government strongly denied both allegations, the Premier describing the value of the department to Tasmania as 'immeasurable'.[16]

Aware that his department was threatened, Emmett embarked in 1922 upon "Back to Tasmania Week", a scheme designed to tempt ex-patriot Tasmanians on mainland Australia back home for holidays by providing them with discounted fares and a week of festivities. In the event, it was found that numbers justified prolonging these celebrations by an extra week.[17] In his report that year, Emmett could claim that the gross receipts of all branches had risen from £35,163 the previous year to £70,238.[18] The hotels, he said, were 'taxed to the utmost'. He recommended to the government that it 'invest in a bold scheme of hotel building'.[19]

It was not to be. In 1923, the incoming Lyons government, faced with the state's huge deficit and the mounting Railways Department debts, retrenched savagely. The agency and bureau in Perth and Brisbane respectively were shut, and Emmett was returned to his previous post of senior clerk, where he remained for the next five years.[20] Ironically, in Emmett's final year with the Bureau, 1922-23, gross receipts reached £76,667, which was to remain a peak figure until the end of the decade.[21]

Throughout the period 1923-28, tourism was handled by the Railways Department as part of its general business. The work was scaled down – for example, the magazine *Picturesque Tasmania*, which had been published bi-monthly since 1920, was discontinued in 1924 – and made to serve more directly the interests of the beleaguered railways.[22]

1918-19	£16,920
1919-20	£25,204

The estimated increase for the following year was from £9,0000 to £10,000. Emmett believed that tourists spend 'the best part of £500,000' in Tasmania.

16 WORLD, 15 November 1921.

17 MERCURY, 8 April 1922 and 4 December 1922.

18 MERCURY, 24 October 1922.

19 JPP 1922/43.

20 SERVICE PUBLISHING CO, THE, 1931; *Cyclopaedia of Tasmania*; Hobart, 69.

21 JPP 1929/24.

22 MOSLEY, *op. cit.*, 38.

1925 was a disastrous year for the industry. A crippling shipping strike cost the state an estimated £250,000 in lost tourist revenue, £915 was refunded to disappointed travellers and the Melbourne bureau ran up a deficit of £399. To compensate for reductions in tourist personnel on his staff, the Commissioner for Railways made arrangements to set up a government appointed Tourist Advisory Board composed of representatives from all parts of the state and branches of the industry.[23] The Board's purpose was to raise funds from local authorities with which to run a comprehensive and continuous advertising scheme. It existed until 1928.

A second organisation was founded in 1925 having as its main object the attraction of tourists to Tasmania. This was the "Come to Tasmania" Organisation, which was established at the suggestion of L Norman, a nationalistic Tasmanian who wanted to create an organisation that was as 'non-parochial as possible'.[24] Local committees were set up all over the island, co-ordinated by a State Executive Council, for 'one united effort, namely, to attract a greater number of tourists for the season 1926-27'.[25] In 1926, the Come to Tasmania State Executive published an 80-page tourist guide book, *Come to Tasmania*, and ran a statewide festival from 6 to 11 November.

Encouraged by improvements in the economy, the Lyons government increased the vote to the Tourist Bureau for 1926-27, and the Railways Department, aware that other states and countries were every year improving their tourist resorts and giving extra attention to advertising, was able to invest an additional £1,000 in publicity.[26]

The McPhee government, on assuming office in 1928, gave the industry a temporary fillip by restoring the Tourist Bureau as a separate branch of the Railway Department, Emmett resuming the position of director. The Brisbane bureau was also re-opened and a new one set up between December and April at Burnie on the

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23 JPP 1925/21.

24 NORMAN, L, 1930; *Tasmania's Strange Story;* Come to Tasmania Organisation, Hobart, 94. The avowed policy of the Tourist Bureau was to avoid regional bias. However, it was claimed in the north that 'because of its policy of attracting tourists onto the railway, Launceston, the main arrival point, was being treated as a mere steamer and rail terminus' (MOSLEY, *op. cit.*, 41). More strident criticism came from the west coast in 1922, when at a public meeting Emmett's attitude was alleged to be 'destructively hostile' to the west coast tourist trade, and was severely condemned (MERCURY, 25 October 1922).

25 NORMAN, *op. cit.*, 94.

26 JPP 1927/20.

northwest coast of Tasmania. This was to cater for the considerable number of visitors who now made use of the new Melbourne-Burnie route.[27]

The 1928 and 1929 seasons were good ones, the Bureau's gross receipts for the latter setting a new record of £79,024. Then the Depression began to take its toll. The following year, receipts were down to £48,133. This was in part a reflection of the Bureau's decreased expenditure, which fell to £9,404 from £12,357 the previous year. In the financial year 1931-32, it was reduced further to £6,682, and receipts remained much the same. But this was the bottom of the trough. Expenses were gradually raised over the next two years, restrictive shipping regulations were eased,[28] and the Depression began to lift. In 1932-33, gross receipts rose by £13,413 to £61,779 and the following year increased again to £73,051 for an expenditure of just under £10,000.[29]

Until 1934, tourism was an important but limited revenue earner for Tasmania. One of its limitations was the lack of provision for visitors to bring cars or motor-cycles across Bass Strait.[30] Touring by road in this period was catered for by various car rental and bus companies. Tasmanian car owners were also exhorted to 'know their own country',[31] and this also boosted tourism by road. Although Emmett could write in 1921 that it was 'a widely recognised fact that many of the visitors ... are satisfied after "doing" Mount Wellington and Port Arthur',[32] increased mobility put many more attractions within range of tourists as the decade progressed. These

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27 JPP 1929/24.

28 The coastal clauses of the federal *Navigation Act* were blamed for much loss of tourist revenue. These clauses in essence protected Australian shipping from foreign competition, but they limited considerably the availability of berths for tourists. The coastal clauses of the Act were further modified in 1933.

29 JPP 1933/15 and JPP 1934/11.

30 Two others were the generally sub-standard nature of accommodation, and the unreliability of the Bass Strait ferry service.

31 The Government Tourist Bureau's 1916 *Tasmanian Motorists Comprehensive Road Guide* contained the following advertisement: 'TASMANIANS: DO YOU KNOW YOUR OWN COUNTRY? Remember: that a holiday once a year is a good investment. That after a holiday you think better, work better and live better.... That if thousands come from overseas to visit Tasmanian resorts surely it must be worth your while to visit them.' (GOVERNMENT TOURIST BUREAU, *op. cit.*) Ten years later, another guide book advised: 'Our slogan should be Tasmanians, know Tasmania! and then invite others to come and see it' (LORD, C E and REID, A M, 1926; *Tasmania at Home*; Mercury, Hobart, 156).

32 WORLD, 15 June 1921.

included a number of historical attractions, but little attempt was made to preserve, exploit or interpret these.

Such preservation as did occur was made possible by the passage of the *Scenery Preservation Act 1915*, but in effect this did little more than limit the decay of Port Arthur. However, the Act had the potential to do more, and eventually played a significant part in securing a future for historical tourism in Tasmania. Exploitation of the state's history was carried out by novelists, film makers, museum owners and at least one well-placed thief;[33] but of historical sites, only Port Arthur was to any extent commodified for the tourist market. Nevertheless, the tourist guide books of the period indicate a growing awareness that tourists to Tasmania were increasingly drawn by the state's history and relics. Interpretation of these, as in previous periods, was characterised by the prevalent attitudes towards the past. After the First World War, these diversified, but generally they were as uneasy as in pre-War Tasmania. Only towards the end of the period did the perceived financial success of two projects help Tasmanians to accept the convict period as a foundation for the present, in P R Hay's definition,[34] as part of their 'heritage'.

4.2 ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE PAST

Following World War I, Tasmanians were able to think differently about themselves, and this altered how they needed to view the past. Prior to the war, it has been suggested, many Tasmanians feared that their convict ancestry might be due to a genetic weakness which could be passed down to them. Consequently, what they desired was a test in which they could prove their biological fitness. Sport provided this to a degree, but the ultimate test could only be found in war.[35]

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33 This was John Moore-Robinson, who, when working as (effectively) the Tasmanian government's official archivist (part-time) from 1919 until 1925, stole at least one original government document of considerable antiquity. This was John Batman's 1835 report to Governor Arthur, sent from Port Philip. Moore-Robinson first attempted to get £1,000 for the document. How much he finally sold it for and how many other documents he stole and sold is unclear. What is clear is, as Peter Biskup has pointed out: 'Estrays, and in particular Tasmanian estrays, played an important part in the collecting game, as more and more individuals were prepared, and able to pay, good money for them' (BISKUP, P, 1989; J Moore-Robinson, a Trader in Records, *Papers and Proceedings of the 7th Bicentennial Conference of Australian Archivists Inc.*, Hobart 2-6 June 1989, 47-57).

34 See page 2 above.

35 GRIFFITHS, T, 1987; Past Silences: Aborigines and Convicts in Our History Making, *Australian Cultural History* **6**, 18-32. Griffiths correctly identifies this as a trait which was common throughout

Twenty four Tasmanians died in the Boer War and five hundred and twenty two in World War I.[36] The courage, fitness and fighting ability of the Tasmanian soldiers could not be questioned, and was enthusiastically commemorated by the erection of war memorials throughout the state, the one in Hobart being the first in the Commonwealth to be unveiled.[37]

But although the bogey of "genetic weakness" had been laid to rest, the time was not yet ripe for pride in convict ancestry. The penal period still tarnished the image of Britain, and there was no lessening of imperial fervour in Tasmania after 1918. The unexpected success of the Bolshevik revolution and the gathering strength of the Sinn Fein were both seen as threats to Empire, and prompted Tasmanians to rally stoutly in its defence. It was still necessary, therefore, to deny the convict past, but a new past had to be created befitting the freshly tested colonial heroes, a past which *could* be celebrated. The problem was that in the Tasmania of the 1920s and early 1930s, there was not much to celebrate. The creation of an appropriate past for celebration therefore had to await an upturn in the island's fortunes. This did not occur until after 1934.

Meanwhile, the main attitudes towards the past were still the denial and evasion of the bourgeois elite, the humanism of writers such as Beattie, and, for the purposes of the tourist market, sensationalism and romanticism. But a new attitude, based, it was claimed, upon rigorous adherence to documented historical fact, began to emerge during this period. The term 'pendanticism' has been coined in order to describe this attitude. Those who adopted it claimed that their work exposed the sensational and romantic embroidery in the popular interpretations of Tasmania's past.[38] However, as will be shown, the work of this school was itself anything but objective.

Australia, and not peculiar to Tasmania, though it is worth noting that in the conscription referenda of 1916 and 1917, Tasmania alone of the states recorded a yes-vote on both occasions.

36 ROBSON, 1991, *op. cit.*, 214.

37 The ceremony took place on 13 December 1925 before 9,000 people (*ibid.*, 343).

38 The 'pedanticist' attitude towards the past extended beyond the convict past, and while it produced some valuable research it also led to undignified in-fighting and a downgrading of history to pedantic point-scoring. The most striking example of the bickering between historians occurred when in 1923 a Royal Society expedition to Prince of Wales Bay attempted to erect a memorial cairn to mark the exact landing site of Tasman in 1642. The party could not agree upon the exact spot, and split into two camps. Although a concrete cairn *was* erected in the remote bay, the controversy raged for three years. As a neutral member of the expedition later wrote: 'The reading public were at first a little amused at the differences between the Royal Society's "experts" and later irritated. I do not think the continuance [of the

All of the above attitudes towards Tasmania's past confronted tourists. Some were placed before them for ideological ends, some for blatantly commercial ends, some for both. But tourist promoters also recognised that what attracted tourists about the past was not necessarily its sensational or romantic or even historical aspects. It was also attractive simply because it was "old", and increasingly it came to be promoted for this reason alone.

4.2.1 Old Tasmania – 'extinct' Tasmanians

One of the 'valued attributes' of antiquity identified by Lowenthal is 'remoteness'. As he puts it: 'Sheer age lends romance to times gone by'.[39] Visitors were attracted to Tasmania after the first world war partly to experience the romance of its age.

Although scarcely old by British standards, in the context of Australia in the 1920s, the relics of Tasmania's European past were old enough to qualify as remote.[40] As a Welsh visitor said in 1927, Hobart 'stirs interest in the heart of the historian'.[41] This fact was recognised by several tourism promoters and authors of guide books. T Ford ("The Captain"), for example, brought out *Old Landmarks ... Hobart Town* in 1931.[42] The Government Tourist Bureau also perceived virtue in age. In a 1918 guide book, Oatlands was described as having 'one of the oldest churches in Tasmania' while at Ross was 'one of the oldest bridges'.[43] In 1934, another of the Bureau's publications advised its readers:

> At Richmond, 14 miles from Hobart, may be seen the *oldest* stone bridge in the Commonwealth and the *oldest* Catholic Church; at New Norfolk is Australia's *oldest* inn... [emphasis added].[44]

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debate] added to the public esteem of historical investigations.' (REYNOLDS, J, 1964; Some Recollection of the Tasman Memorial Controversy, *Tasmanian Historical Research Association Papers and Proceedings* **13** (2), 39-49.)

39 LOWENTHAL, *op. cit.*, 53.

40 'How long ago "remote" is depends on the context.' (LOWENTHAL, *loc. cit.*)

41 PORTER, G, 1934; *Wanderings in Tasmania;* Selwyn and Blount, London, 63. Porter, in fact, was not a historian but a retired bank manager.

42 "CAPTAIN, THE", 1931; *Old Landmarks ... Hobart Town;* Walch's, Hobart.

43 TASMANIAN GOVERNMENT TOURIST DEPARTMENT, 1918; *Tasmanian Motorists' Comprehensive Road Guide;* Government Printer, Hobart, 17.

44 TASMANIAN GOVERNMENT TOURIST BUREAU, 1934; *Tasmania (Australia);* Government Printer, Hobart, 4.

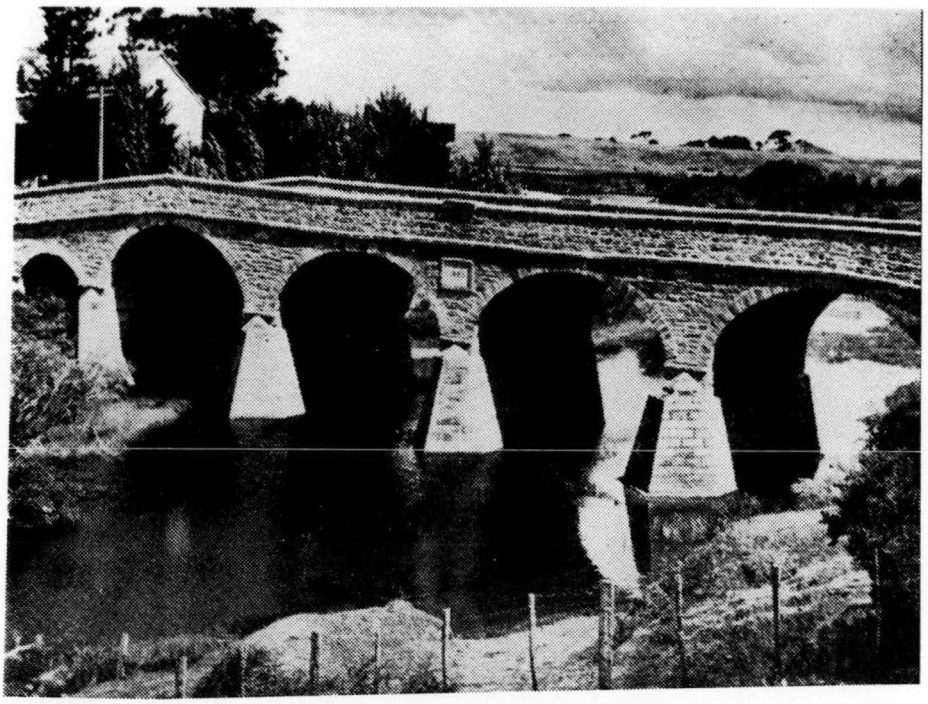

FIGURE 4.1

RICHMOND BRIDGE

Consciousness of the interest in Tasmania's antiquity caused the Bureau to draw attention to the antiquity of attractions which, from their inception, had been of interest to tourists for other reasons. Thus in 1920 the hatchery at Salmon Ponds where brown trout were successfully acclimatised in 1876, became 'historic'.[45] So too did the shot tower at Taroona, built in 1870. In 1904, the abolition of an interstate tariff on lead shot had rendered it non-competitive. It went out of production, and was sold in 1911. It then rapidly went through seven more changes of hands.[46] During the 1920s, its owner allowed visitors to climb the tower, and at one stage its key was held at the Government Tourist Bureau.[47] Overtaken by progress, it became a historic tourist attraction though barely fifty years old.

Interest in antiquities was spurred in some cases by centenaries. These were usually accompanied by publicity and sometimes by celebrations. At the centenary of the laying of the first stone of Richmond Bridge in 1923, for instance, five hundred people in period costume marched through the streets of the town to the bridge. There, the Speaker of the House of Assembly unveiled an inscribed plaque which

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45 TASMANIAN GOVERNMENT TOURIST DEPARTMENT, 1920; *Complete Guide to Tasmania*; Government Printer, Hobart, 32.

46 LORD, R, 1980; *The Shot Tower and its Builder, Joseph Moir*; Speciality Press, Hobart, 53.

47 TASMANIAN GOVERNMENT TOURIST DEPARTMENT, 1920, *op. cit.*, 19 and LORD and REID, *op. cit.*, 17.

commemorated the laying of the stone. One point made in a speech at the ceremony was that '[t]here was no railway, and that was one reason why Richmond had not kept up with the general development of the State'.[48] It was precisely this lack of development that was responsible for the preservation of Richmond as something of a living museum. Its popularity with tourists increased with the town's accessibility by public transport.[49]

Several towns on the Hobart to Launceston Road had likewise remained dormant when bypassed by the railway. In the age of motor transport, their preserved antiquity and renewed accessibility attracted tourists. These towns too celebrated centenaries during the interwar years. Ross turned one hundred in 1921 and its famous bridge, considered 'an important asset from the point of view of the tourist traffic', in 1936.[50] The centenary of the bridge at Campbell Town, itself an old settlement, was celebrated in the same year.[51]

And if European Tasmania was not old enough, there were always 'the extinct Tasmanians' which a 1925 handbook claimed 'were the only known direct descendants of the original Adam'.[52] Several new attractions appeared in the early 1930s based upon the perceived interest in the physiology and presumed culture of the Aborigines, who were considered not merely primitive, but primordial, and fascinating for both reasons.[53]

The centre of interest in Tasmanian Aboriginals was the Tasmanian Museum. By 1920, the Director, Clive Lord, could boast that its collection of Tasmanian skeletal material was the world's largest.[54] And still it grew. R Sticht's west coast collection was presented to the Museum in 1922.[55] The greater part of A J Taylor's collection

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48 WORLD, 10 December 1923.

49 There were motor excursions to 'the old Georgian town of Richmond' and American tea in the 'historic town hall' in 1926 (COME TO TASMANIA STATE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE, 1926; *Come to Tasmania*; Hobart, 71).

50 MERCURY, 24 October 1936 and 16 November 1936.

51 MERCURY, 24 October 1936.

52 GOVERNMENT OF TASMANIA, 1925; *Tasmanian Handbook of General Information*; Government Printer, Hobart, 4.

53 Lowenthal, while arguing that Australians, with their brief recorded history, are 'solaced by natural antiquity', holds that they 'find roots in nature, not in aboriginal man' (*op. cit.*, 54). This was not the case prior to the Second World War.

54 JPP 1920/19.

55 MERCURY, 2 December 1922.

was purchased on his death the following year.[56] By 1932, the Tasmanian Museum, the Queen Victoria Museum, the Devonport Council Collection and the Crowther Collection contained between them 165 skulls, half the total number known to exist.[57] All except the latter were on public view and attracted tourists.[58] In the case of the Tasmanian Museum, the 'ethnological collection' was the biggest draw card, and the prize exhibit was undoubtedly Truganini's skeleton. It is difficult to know what the average tourist made of this. L Norman found it 'pathetic',[59] and by implication condemned its exhibition. Porter regarded it as 'the most significant and certainly the most melancholy object in the whole museum'.[60]

In 1931, the skeletal collection was joined by two other ethnological exhibits. The first was a diorama comprising 'three figures, a man, a woman, and a child, in the characteristic setting of a family encampment'.[61] The group, costing £500, was a gift to the impecunious museum from a grateful ex-employee who had been on its staff for 47 years. At its unveiling by the state's Attorney-General, the diorama had considerable impact:

> It is so natural and lifelike that it has almost the effect of a shock to realise that it is only an exhibit, and not living fact. The grouping and setting have been done with such accuracy of detail, based on the most authoritative historical evidence, that the effect is one of reality.[62]

Today, this familiar nuclear family, well-regulated by division of labour and implicit status relationship, fails to convince.[63] Yet in the 1930s, it represented the acme of the artform. After his visit in 1932, the University of Melbourne's Mr

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56 JPP 1923/8.

57 MERCURY, 14 January 1932.

58 William Crowther allowed George Porter to view his collection (PORTER, *op. cit.*, 165), but it is unlikely to have been inspected by many tourists.

59 NORMAN, *op. cit.*, 66.

60 PORTER, *op. cit.*, 68.

61 MERCURY, 22 May 1931.

62 *Ibid.*

63 In 1992, thought was given to removing the exhibit, because it clearly revealed nothing about the life-style of Tasmanian Aborigines, However, it was allowed to remain because it was regarded as a revealing statement on the thought prevalent at the time of its creation. To encourage visitors to ponder the dilemma of the exhibition's 1992 curator, the exhibit had affixed to it a "dilemma" sticker (Personal comment: Julia Clark, Curator of Anthropology, Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery).

Wunderley found it 'so excellent that it could not fail to give everyone seeing it a very clear idea of the extinct race of Tasmania, and their mode of living'.[64]

Two years later, Mr Markham, Empire Secretary of the Museum Association, in a generally dismal appraisal of the Tasmanian Museum, directed special attention to the 'excellent ethnographical group ... which may be regarded as the finest of its kind in Australia'.[65]

FIGURE 4.2

ABORIGINAL DIORAMA AT THE TASMANIAN MUSEUM

The second exhibit was an old recording rediscovered by Clive Lord in 1931 of Fanny Cochrane Smith singing an Aboriginal song. Despite the song's authenticity, Lord said, 'evidence of white blood exists'.[66]

The other Aboriginal attraction which came to the attention of tourists in the early 1930s was at Devonport Bluff. This was a group of 75 or so 'mysterious carvings' which, said a 1933 guide book, were pointed out to tourists by residents who knew

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64 MERCURY, 14 January 1932.

65 MERCURY, 17 April 1934.

66 MERCURY, 23 May 1931. It may be pertinent (if a trifle churlish) to pose the question: Was Lord influenced in his insistence that Truganini was "the last Tasmanian Aboriginal" by the fact that her skeleton was one of his museum's prize exhibits, and would have dropped considerably in both value and significance if it could be demonstrated that she had been outlived by another?

their whereabouts.[67] The existence of the 'carvings' had been known to lay people for some time, H Stuart Dove of Devonport having written a piece on them for the *Australasian* in 1923.[68] They were first subjected to scientific scrutiny in A L Meston's paper, *Aboriginal Rock Carvings on the North West Coast of Tasmania*, delivered to the Royal Society in 1931.[69]

Archie Meston, a Devonport school teacher, stated that he knew of 75 carvings. He provided descriptions and photographs, and some comparisons with Aboriginal rock carvings found elsewhere in Australia. A few months later, Meston's claim was challenged in another paper read to the Royal Society, *Preliminary Note on the Supposed Aboriginal Rock-Carvings at Mersey Bluff* by E O G Scott, at the time the Assistant Curator of the Queen Victoria Museum.[70] Scott, who supported his arguments with a great deal of biological and ethnographic evidence, argued that the formations were probably natural in origin.[71]

The controversy over the authenticity of the carvings has been on-going. Some archaeologists believe none of the formations to be genuine carvings, some feel that a selection of them are. Few ascribe authenticity to all.[72] For them to be a tourist attraction, needless to say, it was essential that they be authentic, and so they were described, not least by the owner of the first museum at the Bluff, Mr Leek, who in fact had first pointed them out to Dove in 1914. Their authenticity has continued to be of considerable importance to the local tourist trade, and indeed provides a justification for the Aboriginal museum opened on the Bluff in 1976 and still on the site today.

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67 DYER, A R, 1933; *Tasmania for Tourists and Tasmanians*; Walch, Hobart, 103.

68 AUSTRALASIAN, 15 September 1923.

69 MESTON, A L, 1931; Aboriginal Rock Carvings on the North West Coast of Tasmania, *Royal Society of Tasmania Papers and Proceedings 1931*, 12-19. Meston delivered his paper on 20 April 1931.

70 SCOTT, E O G, 1931; Preliminary Note on the Supposed Aboriginal Rock-Carvings at Mersey Bluff, *Royal Society of Tasmania Papers and Proceedings 1931*, 112-129. Scott delivered his paper on 27 July 1931.

71 Meston himself continued his interest in rock carvings, locating a group north of Mount Cameron West in the far northwestern corner of Tasmania in 1934 (MERCURY, 5 March 1934). These were, as far as may be ascertained, universally regarded as authentic, but due to their isolation attracted no significant tourist attention. However, in 1935 a plaster cast was made of the carvings and placed on exhibition in the Tasmanian Museum's ethnological gallery (MERCURY, 26 October 1935).

72 Charles Barrett, for example, one of Australia's leading naturalists, believed them to be genuine (BARRETT, *op. cit.*, 81).

The mere presentation of Tasmania's antiquities, European and Aboriginal, to tourists was easy. The uneasiness, as previously, lay in telling their stories, in interpretation.

4.2.2 Denial, romanticisation, sensationalism

Emmett himself was something of a historian. In 1921 he was accepted for membership of the Royal Society, and gave talks on historical subjects.[73] Nevertheless, the Government Tourist Bureau did little before 1934 to promote an understanding of the state's history. Emmett himself wrote in 1913 the first Tasmanian tourist guide book aimed specifically at children, *Tommy's Trip to Tasmania*. Among its few references to the state's historical attractions is the following description of Port Arthur:

> the prettiest old town in this world or any other. Avenues of rocks and real ruins. I had just read *For the Term of His Natural Life*, so was extra interested in historic Eaglehawk Neck and Port Arthur. It must have been nice being put away in such a pretty place.[74]

Emmett allowed this interpretation to stand in the many editions of the book which were brought out up to 1938. Indeed, on the whole, Emmett seemed little concerned that the Bureau's literature should provide in-depth information on the state's history. The few references to the convict past which do exist seek to play down its importance. Thus, the following:

> At first the island was used as a penal settlement, but transportation ceased at the end of 1852, and early next year, amid great rejoicings at having succeeded in stopping their beautiful home being used as a prison place, the colonists took for their land the name Tasmania, and discarded the old name, Van Diemen's Land, with its unpleasant memories.

This sanitised construction of Tasmania's past which began its life in a book for school children published in 1928 found its way verbatim into the Tourist Department's 1930s publication *Tasmania: The Island State of the Australian*

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73 THWAITES, J B, 1979; Emmett, Evelyn Temple, in NAIRN, B and SERLE, G (Eds), *Australian Dictionary of Biography Volume 7*; Melbourne University Press, 438-439. Two of Emmett's talks were *Historical Richmond*, presented on Melbourne's Radio 3LO (MERCURY, 11 June 1934) and a slide lecture, *The Main Road a Century Ago*, presented at the Tasmanian Museum to the Field Naturalists Club (MERCURY, 13 July, 1934).

74 EMMETT, E T, 1938; *Tommy's Trip to Tasmania*; Government Printer, Hobart, 12.

Commonwealth – Brief Facts Regarding History and Development, where it survived unchanged until 1951.[75]

This publication went on to say: 'The struggles of the early settlers make interesting reading, a very vivid account being given in Fenton's *History of Tasmania*'. Fenton's history, described by Robson as 'complet[ing] the revision of the past',[76] was first published in 1884. Long out of print in the 1930s, it was difficult to obtain.

Nor were new historical works appearing. In 1916, Professor Scott's *A Short History of Australia* gave Tasmania scant coverage.[77] And locally written works were of a specialist nature. R W Giblin's *The Early History of Tasmania* (1928) reached Risdon, but managed to avoid the massacre, and J H Cullen's *Young Ireland in Exile* (also 1928) covered only the acceptable face of convictism.[78] L Norman, the founder of the "Come to Tasmania" organisation, set himself the task in *Tasmania's Strange Story* (1930) of 'show[ing] and elaborat[ing] certain strange, romantic and wonderful actions which redound vastly to the credit of a race which has inhabited the island for 126 years'. To achieve this, he said, he would gloss over convictism, bushranging and Aborigines.[79]

As George Porter, an observant Welsh tourist who spent three months holidaying in Tasmania in 1927, was able to ascertain: 'Serious historians do not attach much

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75 TASMANIAN GOVERNMENT TOURIST DEPARTMENT, undated; *Tasmania: The Island State of the Australian Commonwealth – Brief Facts Regarding History and Development;* Government Printer, Hobart, 5 and TASMANIAN GOVERNMENT TOURIST BUREAU, 1928; *Tasmania: The Island State of the Australian Commonwealth – Brief Facts for School Students;* Government Printer, Hobart, 4. In connection with this interpretation of Tasmania's past, it is interesting to read Dilke's clear-eyed denunciation of 1868: 'the remonstrances of the free colonists read somewhat oddly, for it would seem as though men who quitted, with open eyes, Great Britain to make their home in the spots which their Government had chosen as its giant prisons have little right to pretend to rouse themselves on a sudden, and cry out that England is pouring the scum of the soil on to a free land, and that they must rise and defend themselves against the grievous wrong' (DILKE, *op. cit.*, 101).

76 ROBSON, 1991, *op. cit.*, 73.

77 SCOTT, E, 1916; *A Short History of Australia;* Oxford University Press, London.

78 GIBLIN, R W, 1928; *The Early History of Tasmania: the Geographical Era 1642 -1804;* Methuen, London, and CULLEN, J H, 1928; *Young Ireland in Exile;* Talbat Press, Cork, Ireland.

79 NORMAN, *op. cit.*, 22. In the case of Aborigines, he was – to his considerable credit – unsuccessful, attacking the 'insidious influence of the white race' and even going so far as to endorse Mark Twain's proposition that interbreeding between Aborigines and the Whites 'would have done the latter some good' (*ibid.*, 61).

weight to the convict era of the island's history as an influence in the development of the modern State of Tasmania'.[80] A few years later, the *Mercury* lamented that:

> the attention of the community, and of the world, is directed almost entirely towards the remains of the convict system, which has the smallest possible connection with the history of the real development of the State.[81]

Such was the need to stress the rift between past and present that even books which sought to exploit the convict past demonstrated an obligation to express this sentiment. Margaret Hookey's *The Romance of Tasmania* (1921), for example, was an unashamedly romantic depiction of the penal era, when despite 'the inhumanity of man to man ... romance, undaunted by its grim surroundings, slip[ped] through the prison bars'.[82] It still finished with a section on 'Tasmania today' and a celebration of the Tasmanians who fell in 'the great cause'. T Ford, in his blatantly sensational, *Inhumanity: Historical Tales of Convict Days* (1932), also felt the need to advise his readers that the collection had not been put together 'with any idea of awakening any morbid feelings within the readers, but as a comparison showing the differences between the events recorded, which are a century past, and the present age which we now enjoy'.[83]

In spite of this trend, there were some authors for whom the convict past was a vital presence, either because it touched them emotionally or because it affected them personally. This led to two divergent styles of interpretation, both selective in their use of evidence, but both acknowledging that the convict past was far from irrelevant.

4.2.3 Humanism and 'pedanticism'

Roy Bridges (1885-1952) was a prominent Tasmanian novelist. The best known of his thirty-six novels is the group of six convict novels, the first of which was written in 1930. Also that year, he wrote a short piece for the Melbourne *Argus* on the significance of the Port Arthur Ruins. For him the site was suggestive of those who suffered there. In the fabric of the buildings he saw signs of the labour of those who erected them. Thus the stone blocks left in the quarry told him of the left- and right-

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80 PORTER, *op. cit.*, 106.

81 MERCURY, 29 May 1936.

82 HOOKEY, M, 1921; *The Romance of Tasmania*; Alexander McCubbin, Melbourne, 25.

83 "THE CAPTAIN", 1932; *Inhumanity: Historical Tales of Convict Days*; Walch, Hobart, 5.

handed convicts who faced one another to cut them. The colour of the stone told that it was used in the Model Prison, and the route between quarry and building was suggestive of the rough track over which the stones were dragged. For Bridges, Port Arthur was peopled with ghosts. He could not visit the site without being made acutely aware of their suffering:

> The records of Point Puer quiver with horror. The punishments of children sicken the senses.[84]

Bridges had no time for those who apologised for the system; neither did he care greatly about the historical accuracy of certain details:

> I am convinced that these tunnels under the ruins were indeed cells for children. I am convinced, from reading the Beattie records, that tormented youth might well have found its way to the cliffs at hand and suicide.

FIGURE 4.3

"UNDERGROUND CELLS", POINT PUER

For Bridges, the ruined buildings were neither romantic nor picturesque; they were 'monuments of victory ... [on] a battle-ground of liberty and faith against oppression, cruelty and shame'.

Bridges was willing to accept the most horrific stories about Port Arthur, not because of a delight in sensationalism, but because they provided him with

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84 ARGUS, 30 August 1930; *Port Arthur: Significance of the Ruins* by Roy Bridges.

weaponry in a crusade. He stands in a line of humanistic commentators on Tasmania's past leading from Marcus Clarke through to Charles Barrett, whose work will be covered in the next section. In contrast to their work was the work of others which, according to Bridges, exemplified the 'present tendency ... to belittle the horrors of the System'.[85] This tendency was a hallmark of the 'pedanticists'.

The two main proponents of pedanticism in the 1920s were J Moore-Robinson and C E Lord. Both lectured the Royal Society on historical topics. The latter was secretary of the Society and, from 1918, Director of the Tasmanian Museum. For both men, historical evidence was not used in a purely objective way, although both may well have protested that it was. Rather, their work, particularly Moore-Robinson's, may be seen as a reaction to the romanticisation, mythologising and sensationalism which had accrued around so much of Tasmania's past. Both wrote short papers on Port Arthur in the 1920s which exemplified this approach.

Moore-Robinson's paper was delivered to the Royal Society in November 1922. While the author made clear that he did not intend it to be 'an apology for the inhumanities habitually practised during Port Arthur's worst days', he described only the early period of settlement and the late period of the prison's closure. He was at pains to advise his readers to approach contemplation of the history of Port Arthur 'with a mind purged of preconceived notions of the place', and Marcus Clarke was predictably blamed for spreading many false notions. As a counter to the familiar emphasis upon harsh discipline, he stressed the laxness of the early regime, and quoted G W Walker's claim that despite increasing severity there was 'still a door open for the deserving'. 'It is most desirable', he added, 'in the interests of true history that this essential fact should be duly appreciated'.[86]

Lord's article, published in 1926, also stressed redemption. As the successful descendant of a convict (a fact he kept very much to himself),[87] Lord was keen to point out that: 'many of these men by good conduct soon secured their freedom,

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85 ARGUS, 30 August 1930; *Port Arthur: Significance of the Ruins* by Roy Bridges.

86 WORLD, 15 November 1922; *A Brief History of Port Arthur* by J Moore-Robinson.

87 'Mr Clive Lord ... is ... descended from a *convict*. Of this he informed me *himself* and it is only when one knows people very well that they tell one this sort of thing. His (I think) Great Grandfather was sent out early in the 19th century to Tasmania, and, when there, made good.' (Sir Francis Newdegate, Governor of Tasmania (1917-1920) to Stanley Baldwin, quoted in ROE, M, 1989; Vandiemenism Debated: the Filming of 'His Natural Life', 1926-7, *Journal of Australian Studies* 24, 35-51.) Roe's reference for this intriguing letter is: Dominion Office Papers 35/14, Public Records Office (London), (microfilm at National Library of Australia, Canberra).

made good, and died worthy and respected citizens'.[88] Lord also strove to restore the reputation of Point Puer. In its 'halcyon days' he thought it must have presented 'a hive of industry' in which boys were taught by 'competent instructors' and 'were thus given a chance of making good in the world'. 'Many of them did so', he added.

Lord wrote his Port Arthur article for a popular journal rather than for a learned society. As history it is lax. His lectures to the Royal Society are far more worthy.[89] Yet despite its lack of documentation and obvious selectivity, the short piece on Port Arthur foreshadows a new type of acceptance of the convict past which emerged during the Second World War. Commonly described as "white-washing" this new school of revisionist history represented, as will be shown, an important step along the path which gave Tasmanians a new way in which to come to terms with their past.

Tourists, though, lacked the Tasmanians' inhibitions. Alter his denial that serious historians attached weight to the convict era as an influence on modern Tasmania, George Porter added: 'The irresponsible, historically minded visitor to the island, on the other hand, feels the fascination of these early days'.[90] For the tourist industry to capitalise upon this fascination, it was necessary that the island's historical relics be protected. The reality was that in the period since the Armistice, they were being lost at a faster rate than ever.

4.3 RUINATION AND PRESERVATION

Although the age of the motor car was bringing more historical attractions within range of tourists, paradoxically it adversely affected tourism to Settlement Island. The reason for this was that the west coast could only be reached from Hobart by rail at a cost of £5 each way plus an overnight stop at Burnie. After much lobbying, the metalled road was finally built in 1933. As a result, record tourist seasons were experienced in 1935 and 1936.[91]

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88 COURIER ANNUAL, November 1926, p23; *Historic Port Arthur* by Clive Lord.

89 See, for example, The Early History of Maria Island, *Royal Society P & P 1919*, 39-54; The Early History of Bruny Island, *Royal Society P & P 1920*, 114-136; First Discovery of Port Davey and Macquarie Harbour, *Royal Society P & P 1920*, 160-181, and Notes on Captain Bligh's Visits to Tasmania, *Royal Society P & P 1922*, 1-22.

90 PORTER, *op. cit.*, 106.

91 ADVOCATE, 14 October 1936, p8.

It is difficult to know the extent to which Settlement Island was visited both before and after the building of the west coast road. An indication is given by the fact that the Strahan Municipal Council asked for the island to be proclaimed a 'public reserve for tourist purposes' in 1926, claiming that:

> This action is required in view of the fact that the island possesses good historical attractions and very many tourists from various parts of the Commonwealth come to the West Coast to see the remains of the old penal station settlement and the Gordon River a few miles further on.[92]

The island was gazetted on 9 February under the *Crown Lands Act 1911*. The Strahan Council were relieved that this had occurred because property on the island was being removed and in May 1926 iron was taken from the roof of a recently constructed shelter hut. The council informed the police and erected notices telling the public not to interfere with either ruins or buildings. Despite the island's reserved status, protective measures could run to no more.[93]

Between 1926 and 1942, the minute book of the Strahan Municipal Council includes only one reference to Settlement Island, a decision to evict a squatter in 1930, presumably a victim of the Depression.[94] The tourist guide books between 1914 and 1934 are equally silent on the island's charms. The Government Tourist Bureau's *Conducted Excursion to the River Gordon, Mt Lyell, Lake Margaret &c, &c* mentions only that the launch 'passes close to Settlement Island ... the scene of many black deeds'.[95] According to a press report of 1929, the whole island was choked with blackberries and Macquarie Harbour vine.[96] Neglect had – at least temporarily – wiped it off the map as a tourist attraction.

By contrast, Maria Island was not neglected during the 1920s. The Maria Island Land and Development Company was registered in 1920, with the aging Diego Bernacchi at the helm. It bought the freehold land at Darlington, and was then bought out by National Portland Cement. The population of the island grew rapidly to a peak of 500. Accommodation was erected and convict buildings were recycled,

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92 CSD 68/26: Council Clerk to Secretary for Lands, 6 January 1936.

93 MCC 35/3/1, *Minute Book of the Strahan Municipal Council*, 10 March 1926, 14 April 1926 and 12 May 1926.

94 *Ibid.*, 10 September 1930.

95 TASMANIAN GOVERNMENT TOURIST BUREAU, 1916; *Conducted Excursion to the River Gordon, Mt Lyell, Lake Margaret &c, &c*; Government Printer, Hobart, 2.

96 AUSTRALASIAN, 14 September 1929.

the penitentiary being turned into single men's quarters.[97] The cement works was built, and opened in February 1924. Production was brisk for two years; then it became clear that the company's output was too low to be viable. The works struggled on until 1930, when it closed its doors paying shareholders 9d and 1/3d in the pound. After that, the island's population reduced to a handful of farmers, wool growers and fishermen. Many buildings were transported from Darlington to the mainland of Tasmania.

Throughout this period, Maria Island was a popular tourist resort. The Portland Cement Company ran a regular service from Spring Bay to the island in their 'splendid motor launch' which carried 50 passengers.[98] This met the tri-weekly motor mail service from Hobart. A boarding house was opened in 1921 in a building leased from the cement company. Despite their potential for attracting tourists, it was not thought necessary to place any restrictions on the use made of the convict buildings. As a consequence, many were modified and some lost.

Other convict buildings commented on by tourists during the 1920s were scattered throughout Tasmania. Many were in a ruinous condition. Porter in 1927 had pointed out to him in New Norfolk, just west of Hobart, 'the thick wall of part of the house which had once, in convict times, been the Commandant's residence'. He also visited the erstwhile guard-house, now used for storage.[99] In 1928, the Tasmanian Mail published a photograph of the 'Mud Walls' at Jericho in the southern Midlands. They were all that was left of a probation station dating from the 1840s. The writer believed that in a 'few years ... they [would] be back to the dust and mud from whence they sprang'.[100]

On the east coast was the ruin of the Rocky Hills Probation Station, which attracted considerable attention from tourists, partly no doubt because it housed the remains of a treadmill. Its preservation was considered due to its having been roofed with galvanised iron, presumably as a private initiative taken by its owner.[101]

Many historic buildings, though, simply did not survive the first few decades of the twentieth century. The Campbell Town police court was demolished in 1908. In 1919, most of Launceston's old gaol was knocked down to make way for the High

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97 This period is covered in detail in WEIDENHOFER, M, 1977; *Maria Island, a Tasmanian Eden*; Darlington Press, Melbourne, chapter 4.

98 WORLD, 9 December 1920.

99 PORTER, *op. cit.*, 167.

100 TASMANIAN MAIL, 27 June 1928.

101 MERCURY, 31 November 1935.

School.[102] In 1922, the Cascades women's "factory" in Macquarie Street, Hobart was purchased by a building company which intended to replace it with twenty-four self-contained cottages.[103] In 1927 the old police barracks on Franklin Wharf, Hobart, were razed to make way for a new building.[104] In 1934, the century-old Pontville gaol was partly demolished. Two years later, the walls of the remaining portion of the building were considered dangerous. They too were pulled down.[105] As the *Mercury* put it in 1922: 'one by one, these blots on the landscape are being removed'.[106]

However, it was not merely the 'blots' which were being removed. After his visit to Hobart in 1927, George Porter wrote:

> Instead of the town of my imagination, I found a spacious modern town.... Old buildings are very difficult to find, having been nearly all swept away by progress.[107]

Nor was the replacement of old buildings confined to the capital, although it was in Hobart that the most drastic transformation occurred. Most Tasmanian buildings of historic interest to tourists were made of stone, and the Commonwealth Census records their decline. In 1921 there were 1,786 occupied privately-owned stone dwellings in the state; by 1933 this number had dropped to 1,651.[108] In the capital, the corresponding numbers were 731 in 1921 and 671 in 1933.

There were several reasons for the loss of old stone structures. Some were removed by natural causes. In April 1929, the convict-built bridge at Perth, regarded as 'one of the show places of Tasmania', was washed away in a flood.[109] St George's Church, Lachlan, built in 1831, was destroyed by fire a century later.[110] It was followed by "Woodburn", a historic home in Richmond, in 1934.[111]

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102 EXAMINER, 8 July 1933.

103 In fact the project was not completed, and the massive walls of the building remain today.

104 MERCURY, 7 October 1927.

105 MERCURY, 10 September 1936.

106 MERCURY, 5 October 1922, p6.

107 PORTER, *op. cit.*, 64.

108 COMMONWEALTH BUREAU OF CENSUS AND STATISTICS, *Census of Commonwealth of Australia 4th April 1921* , Volume II, Part XXIII, 1682 and *Census of Commonwealth of Australia 30th June 1933*, Volume III, Part XXIV, 2168

109 ARGUS, 6 April 1929.

110 MERCURY, 7 January 1931.

111 MERCURY, 4 March 1934.

The need for road widening as the use of motor transport increased also resulted in the destruction of several old buildings. In 1925, it brought about the removal of Hobart's Alexander Battery.[112] This interesting example of nineteenth century earthworks was built in 1871 and fully armed in 1885 at the time of the Russian scare. It was the subject of a lengthy historical article in the *Mercury* in 1922,[113] but this did not save it. The Bridge Inn at the old settlement of Pontville was also pulled down as part of a road widening scheme in 1929.[114]

Several old landmarks were demolished because they were no longer required by their owners. In 1920, Horton College, near Ross in the Midlands, which featured in many of Tasmania's early tourist guide books, was knocked down for its materials, some of which were sold, some used to build a new residence. To commemorate the school in which many of Tasmania's leading men were educated, the archway of the main door was left standing.[115] In the same year, four cannons from Bellerive Battery were auctioned off in a sale of military ordnance. They were broken up for scrap.[116]

In the rush to modernise, many commercial buildings were swept aside. Among these were a large number of ancient inns. In 1921, an old resident of Launceston compiled a list of fifty pubs which no longer existed,[117] and the demise of old inns in other parts of the state was frequently the subject of commentary in the press.

Other old buildings of considerable historical interest were allowed to fall into disrepair by reason of neglect. Some of these were eventually removed, their passing frequently arousing the interest of the press. At the *Mercury*, the photo-journalist, Mr Rowlands, made a speciality of such stories. For him the demise of old buildings aroused 'indefinable sentiments', and he often sought to spur official indignation at the loss of Tasmania's built heritage. The gradual disintegration of the "Haunted House" at Granton was of particular concern to him. This large, rambling building had been erected for Governor Arthur in the latter part of his administration. Abandoned, it was allowed to decay and by 1930 had been severely vandalised. Rowlands wrote:

> Its value from a touristic point of view would be very considerable were it properly cared for, and made known to the public.... Time

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112 NEWS, 9 August 1925.

113 MERCURY, 18 December 1922.

114 TASMANIAN MAIL, 4 December 1929.

115 MERCURY, 15 November 1920.

116 WORLD, 5 October 1920.

117 EXAMINER, 11 January 1921.

> and again the writer has drawn attention to matters of this kind.[118]

Yet it was not merely potential historical attractions which were allowed to fall into disrepair. Some well established attractions were also left to moulder. Risdon, although referred to in guide books as something which 'no visitor should miss seeing',[119] was ignored after 1904. In 1927, George Porter had difficulty in finding it.[120] Even more vulnerable was "Cook's Tree" on Bruni Island. This was once a giant stringy bark which, it was claimed, James Cook had used to careen his ships.[121] At one stage it contained an inscription that predated invasion. Although the tree was severely burned in the island's 1914 bushfires,[122] it continued to retain its appeal for tourists, to the extent that by 1922 they were said to be carrying it away in pieces.[123]

Even when the public interest was thoroughly roused, governments at all levels were reluctant to spend money on conservation. The state of the Lady Franklin Museum had long been a cause of concern by the 1920s. From 1889, it had been used as an apple store.[124] Ownership and control of the museum was vested in a group of trustees who were bound to apply its rental income (estimated at between £30 and £90 annually)[125] to Christ's College, New Norfolk, the school founded by the Franklins. They were, however, also enjoined 'to maintain the museum in good order and repair'.[126] In 1935, the trustees claimed with a hint of self-justification that over the past decade they had spent £100 on weather-proofing the building,[127] although common belief was that the only expense they had gone to was in covering the

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118 MERCURY, 11 November 1930.

119 TASMANIAN GOVERNMENT TOURIST DEPARTMENT, 1918, *op. cit.*, 14.

120 PORTER, *op. cit.*, 77.

121 This claim was disputed by Clive Lord, among others (BARRETT, *op. cit.*, 218).

122 MERCURY, 13 April 1940; *Capt. Cook's Tree.*

123 EXAMINER, 31 March 1922.

124 WALCH, *op. cit.*, 70.

125 MERCURY, 18 April 1935.

126 Lady Jane Franklin to Bicheno, 17 October 1843. Quoted in full in the MERCURY, 2 February 1935. See also MERCURY, 20 February 1935.

127 MERCURY, 20 February 1935.

original slate roof with galvanised iron,[128] an addition which many felt to be entirely inappropriate.[129]

Dissatisfaction over the trustees' management of the museum surfaced periodically during the first decades of the twentieth century. Their lack of imagination in letting it out as an apple store was criticised as much as their neglect of the building's fabric. Locals felt it to be a betrayal of trust, and tourists felt deceived by the Tourist Department's continued promotion of the building.[130]

Concerned people made several attempts to have the museum restored and used for some sympathetic purpose. In 1923, a well-attended public meeting of the Lenah Valley Progress Association voted unanimously to empower the Executive to negotiate with the trustees to take over the building, but nothing resulted from this.[131]

In 1927, the trustees indicated to the Hobart City Council that they would be willing to hand over the museum and a tiny parcel of land on the condition that the council provided fencing and covered legal costs.[132] The reserves committee recommended against the offer on account of the high initial cost of restoration and the on-going cost of a caretaker's salary, which would have to be borne by rate-payers. The council accepted the committee's recommendation, but in so doing fomented a controversy which raised the museum's public profile. The *Mercury* condemned the council for its short-sightedness. Correspondents wrote in with helpful suggestions for uses to which the building could be put. One forward looking proposal was for a museum 'devoted to those things which belong particularly to women'. This suggestion included the building of a cottage for caretakers 'who would also be women'.[133] A nautical museum and a museum of early colonial exhibits were other suggested uses.[134]

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128 MERCURY, 5 September 1923.

129 Both PORTER (*op. cit.*, 92) and BARRETT (*op. cit.*, 159), for example, commented unfavourably upon this "improvement".

130 The Department's sign-posting led tourists to believe that after a tram trip and a one and half mile walk from the terminus, they would arrive at an active museum. A letter to the *Mercury* from one tourist in 1917 branded the false advertising a "have" (MERCURY, 15 March 1917).

131 MERCURY, 5 September 1923.

132 MERCURY, 20 February 1935.

133 MERCURY, 14 February 1935.

134 MERCURY, 11 March 1936 and 23 May 1935. Dr William Crowther added the weight of his authority to the latter suggestion.

Another suggestion involved the revival of an earlier proposal to remove the museum to Hobart. Previously, this concept had been criticised as damaging to the historical significance of the building.[135] The *Mercury*, while favouring restoration *in situ*, added to the controversy by publishing a photo-montage of the museum transported to Prince's Park, the proposed new location. To the minds of some, this new site was preferable to its secluded valley setting, not only on the grounds of aesthetics and accessibility, but because most Grecian temples were placed well up on hills.[136] For a while, this topic was hotly debated, but, as was usually the case with questions of this nature, it was economics and not aesthetic or historical correctness which determined the outcome: any such move could simply not be afforded.[137]

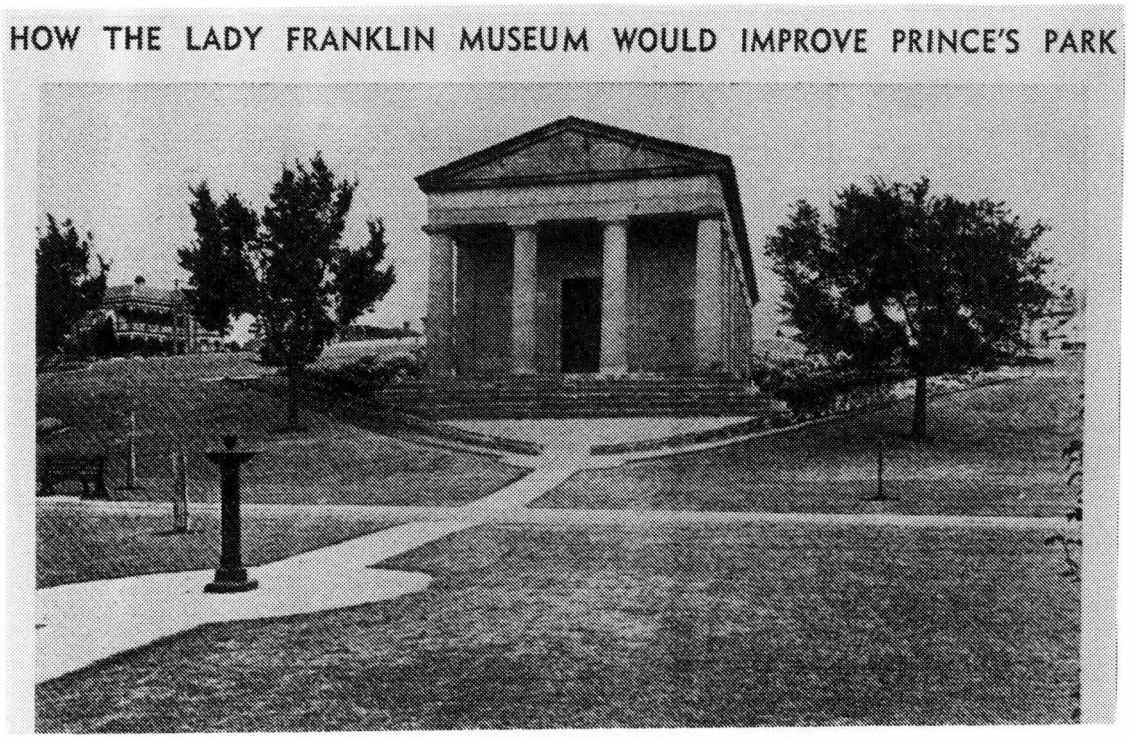

FIGURE 4.4

PHOTO-MONTAGE: LADY FRANKLIN MUSEUM IN PRINCE'S PARK

Only in the case of one site, a European grave yard a stone's throw from Parliament House, did persistent efforts eventually persuade Hobart City Council to act. The site was St David's Burial Ground, Hobart's first, which had been unused since 1872. Its subsequent neglect by its Church of England trustees had, by the early twentieth century, achieved near notoriety. Vaults gaped open and the whole area

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135 MERCURY, 5 September 1923.

136 MERCURY, 11 March 1936.

137 MOORE-ROBINSON, *op. cit.*, 92.

was overgrown, invaded by industry and used for the stacking of timber.[138] To progressive elements in the community, St David's and other disused, neglected cemeteries revealed Hobart as 'a city of the dead, incapable of real progress,... dominated by the dead hand of the Bad Old Past'.

Pressure was put upon Hobart City Council to acquire the city's old graveyards and to turn them into parks, for which there was considerable public demand. The council set up a committee in 1914, but dragged its heels over the matter. The trustees demanded compensation, and, as was usually the case, the council had financial problems. It also had to fend off several outbursts against 'interfering with the last resting places of people long since departed'.[139]

Eventually, after two public meetings and a petition signed by 1,000 people, agreement was reached between the council and the trustees. This was confirmed by an enabling Act of Parliament in 1919.[140] Compensation was fixed at £4,500. The council also agreed to bear the cost of re-interment of remains in the Queenborough cemetery. The schedule to the Act deemed the graves of Governor Collins, Sir Eardley Willmot, Dr Bedford, Archdeacon Hutchins and Captain Kelly to be 'historical monuments'. The council was charged to confer with the church trustees over their maintenance. The Act also empowered the council to lay out the five acre area as a 'place of quiet recreation'.

Typically, lack of money delayed the implementation of the Act. The Hobart City Council had also committed the services of its talented Superintendent of Reserves, L J Lipscombe, to several other post-war beautification projects. It was therefore not until 1926 that the work on St David's Burial Ground was completed for a total cost of approximately £12,000. St David's was widely regarded as a monument to Lipscombe's skill, and one of the city's most beautiful parks.[141] Shortly after its completion, it was used for a concert on the second day of the Come to Tasmania festival. It is likely that the few remaining carefully arranged and imposing monuments to the state's early leading men aroused suitably patriotic sentiments in the audience of tourists.[142]

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138 DAILY POST, 22 September 1916.

139 EXAMINER, 13 July 1921, p8.

140 *St David's Burial Ground Vesting and Improvement Act 1919* (10 Georgii V No 43).

141 PETROW, S, 1989; Making the City Beautiful: Town Planning in Hobart c 1915 to 1926, *Tasmanian Historical Research Association Papers and Proceedings* **36** (3), 99-112.

142 It is also possible that some felt, as did one bandsman, that it was a disgrace that such a significant cemetery should be turned into a place

In the case of the Aboriginal grave yard at Wybalenna, on the other hand, preservation was simply not contemplated. With passage to the island limited to boat, tourists were few. George Porter travelled by this means in 1927. What he saw was the usual combination of ruin and thoughtless recycling. The church (built from bricks made by the Aborigines) was dilapidated, roofed with the ubiquitous galvanised iron and used as a sheep pen and rough store-house. The site of the row of cottages was 'clearly marked by debris, with one or two division walls remaining'.[143] Detached buildings were represented by mounds, upon which bushes grew. Some effort had been made to rehabilitate the cemetery, but the gravestones had been marked by bullets.[144] The "Milligan Tomb", containing the body of a European woman who had died in childbirth in 1844 at the age of 19, was found imposing, and regarded by Porter as 'the most notable historical remnant on the whole site'.[145] He was only able to make a positive identification of the other large and crumbling tomb, known as the "Chief's Grave", as that of Manalaganna, the last chief of the Tasmanian tribes, after carrying out research upon his return to England. The tomb was unmarked, and the locals did not know to whom it belonged.[146] Of the other Aboriginal graves there was no trace: 'Not a stone, nor even a peg, can be found; all their humble mounds have been trampled out by ... stock'.[147]

Only in one case prior to 1915 had the state government been persuaded to spend money on the preservation of historical buildings other than those still in use. These were the Port Arthur buildings assessed by Edward Mulcahy as valuable assets for the tourist industry. The body set up to manage the buildings and empowered to reserve any other building of historic interest was the Scenery Preservation Board. Its record during the interwar years was not impressive.

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of enjoyment. He hoped the music wouldn't be too frivolous (NORMAN, D, 1994; *A Tasmanian Life*; Hobart, 167).

143 PORTER, *op. cit.*, 217.

144 CRITIC, 3 December 1920.

145 PORTER, *op. cit.*, 218.

146 *Ibid.*, 219.

147 *Ibid.*, 220. The Wybalenna graves had also been robbed (CRITIC, 3 December 1920).

4.4 THE SCENERY PRESERVATION BOARD AND THE PRESERVATION OF PORT ARTHUR

In October 1913, William Crooke led a deputation to Edward Mulcahy, then Minister for Lands, arguing for the establishment of a national park at Mt Field. Mulcahy was sympathetic, and an offer of 5,000 acres of Crown land was made. This did not satisfy Crooke, who was still arguing for a larger park when the Solomon Government fell in April 1914. The incoming Labor administration was amenable to meeting Crooke's demands but delayed introducing a National Park Act until more general scenery preservation legislation could be enacted.[148] The *Scenery Preservation Act* was duly passed in July 1915 without amendment.[149]

The substance of the Act was based upon New Zealand models of scenery preservation,[150] and was regarded by J M Powell in his influential book, *Environmental Management in Australia 1788-1914*, as the most progressive legislation of its type in Australia.[151] It provided for a Scenery Preservation Board to be constituted under the direction of the Minister for Lands. The seven members of the Board would be the Surveyor-General (who would act as Chair), the Commissioner of Railways, the Engineer-in-Chief, a representative from the state Tourist Department and three other appointed members. It was to be the Board's business to inspect any lands 'possessing scenic or historic interest' and to recommend any which in their opinion should be permanently reserved as scenic or historic reserves. Crown lands so recommended could be reserved under the Act; private land could be purchased under the *Lands Resumption Act 1910* and then deemed a reserve. The Board was given 'the entire care, control, and management of any reserves and the responsibility for carrying out such work on them as parliament authorised'. There was also a provision, which became important eventually, for the Board to vest the control of any reserve in a municipal council, local authority or special board. Finally, the money necessary to administer the Act was to come from parliamentary vote.

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148 MOSLEY, *op. cit.*, 214 and CASTLES, G, 1986; *Handcuffed Volunteers: a History of the Scenery Preservation Board in Tasmania 1915-1971*; unpublished honours thesis, University of Tasmania, 26. Castles is particularly useful for background on the Scenery Preservation Board generally, and particularly in relation to its role in the preservation of Tasmania's natural scenery.

149 *Scenery Preservation Act 1915* (6 Georgii V No 15). Such was the level of interest of the House in this piece of legislation that at one time, when the Minister for Lands was moving the second reading, 'he was listened to by five members and the Speaker' (MERCURY, 30 July 1915).

150 ROBSON, 1991, *op. cit.*, 292.

151 POWELL, J M, 1976; *Environmental Management in Australia 1788-1914*; Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 114.

The first meeting of the Board took place on 7 July 1916, chaired by the veteran Surveyor-General, A E Counsel. The other Board members included Fowler (the Engineer-in-Chief), L Rodway (Government Botanist), a representative from the Northern Tourist Bureau and the ubiquitous Emmett. The government was recommended to appoint a secretary for £25 per year, to provide £100 for current expenses and £500 on the estimates. Board members were asked to bring with them recommendations for reservation to the next meeting. The list agreed upon included National Park and, from the Tasman Peninsula, various of the natural features plus the Penitentiary, Port Arthur Church, the Model Prison, Dead Island and Point Puer. When at the next meeting Counsel advised the Board that he had drawn up a list of reserves with a view to their being placed under the control of the Scenery Preservation Board, of the Port Arthur historic sites only the Church and Penitentiary were included. Fowler, who had previously argued so strenuously for the preservation of the Penitentiary, now asked for the Model Prison, Point Puer and Dead Island to be added 'if possible'.[152] The Board concurred, and the five Port Arthur historic sites were duly gazetted as reserves on 29 August 1916.

In 1918, the owner of the Powder Magazine at Port Arthur offered it for sale, but at an asking price of £550 the Board considered it too expensive to recommend purchase. The Coalmines at Saltwater River were visited in the same year but judged 'too remote to usefully spend money on at present'.[153] Bowen's Obelisk, was proclaimed in 1920, but the fact was not minuted by the Board. In 1922, an area with a radius of 10 yards around the St George III Monument was reserved and £8 spent on restoring it.[154] In 1925, a suggestion was made that the Lady Franklin Museum plus two acres of land be acquired, but nothing came of this.[155] In fact, no new historic reservations were proclaimed between 1922 and 1939.

Such initiatives as the Board took during the 1920s and 1930s were concerned with its scenic reserves.[156] The historic reserves were simply managed, and even this management soon became minimal. The Scenery Preservation Board, however, did

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152 AA264, *Minutes of the Scenery Preservation Board*, 7 July 1916, 19 July 1916 and 16 August 1916. The Model Prison had presumably been acquired from Woollnough some time previously. Fowler was arguing for this to be done in December 1913.

153 *Ibid.*, 5 February 1918.

154 *Ibid.*, 3 November 1922.

155 *Ibid.*, 24 June 1925.

156 Even these were few and far between. No major scenic reserves were proclaimed until the Cradle Mountain-Lake St Clair National Park in 1940. Gunns Plains Caves were illuminated in 1927/8 and the comparatively huge sum of £200 was spent on track work around Cradle Mountain in 1934.

commence its work in this regard with a show of energy. Guides were appointed for Port Arthur and entry fees fixed at one shilling to be retained by the guides. Regulations were drawn up and displayed, and Fowler had drawings of the old buildings prepared for sale to tourists. Small expenditures were made on restoration work up to 1925. For example: tombstones on Dead Island were straightened, the jetty was replaced and a stonemason was hired to work on some steps. The greatest amount expended in any one year was £38.

By 1924/1925, the total expenditure of the Board had dropped to £32 for the year and meetings had become annual events held essentially to confirm the reports. At its June 1925 meeting, the Board considered an offer from the Tasman Municipal Council to have the Port Arthur reserves and buildings placed under its control. The Board, believing that 'as time has proved ... reserves such as these can be managed best by local residents', gratefully accepted the offer.[157]

The arrangements agreed upon permitted the council to control the reserves for three years from 1 July 1925. There was an obligation to allow visitors access to the reserves at all reasonable times in the company of a guide. The charge for entry, payable at a turnstile erected by the council, was to be 6d. A further 1/- was payable to the guide for his services. A commission of 3d on this fee was taken by the council. A further fee of 1/6d was payable to the ferryman by anyone who visited Dead Island. The council could sub-let any part of the reserves for accommodation purposes or for grazing. It could not build on the reserve or alter any building, except to preserve it safely in its present condition. All money derived from the reserves, after payment of the guides and collection costs had been subtracted, was to be spent on the maintenance of the reserves, provision of paths, notice boards and conveniences and the clearing of undergrowth.[158]

Tasman Municipal Council's leases over the reserves were renewed every three years until 1937; throughout this period, the SPB accepted that they were well run. Although the Board did contribute some funds to upkeep of the buildings, maintenance was mainly managed locally, the Tasman Council paying for any repairs to the buildings out of the income they produced. In 1928/29, this permitted an expenditure of £428, mainly on a toilet block for the Penitentiary.[159]

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157 AA264, *Minutes of the Scenery Preservation Board*, 24 June 1925 and Annual Report 1924/25.

158 TASMANIAN GOVERNMENT GAZETTE, 5 May 1926 and AB541/3, *Correspondence of the Tasman Municipal Council: Tourism*, June to November 1925.

159 AB541/3, *Correspondence of the Tasman Municipal Council: Tourism*: Annual Report 1928/29.

In other years, it was found possible to obtain money from the Public Works Department. In 1928, for example, the PWD made £60 available for repairs to the Church and Model Prison, conditionally upon £30 being contributed locally.[160] In 1929, the intercession of James Murdoch MLC resulted in £160 being set aside to pay two-thirds of the cost of roofing a portion of the Model Prison and securing a wall of the Church, one corner of which was seen to be sinking.[161] By economising, the council only used £108 of the PWD allocation, but when a request was made for the residue because there was 'still plenty of work to be done' the government replied that the vote had lapsed and that no provision for further funds had been made in the following year's estimates.[162]

In 1931, the wall of the Church was continuing to buckle in spite of the work that had been carried out. The council felt that only by pulling it down and rebuilding it would the problem be solved. It estimated that for £200 the job could be done and the walls cement-capped. Half this amount was requested from the government, which was led to believe that without it the Church would fall down.[163] Nevertheless, 'owing to the serious financial position', the request was refused.[164] The following year, after the Warden had made a personal representation to the Attorney-General, the release of funds was agreed to and the work carried out in late 1933.[165]

Yet despite this work, the poor condition of the buildings was frequently noted. In 1933, after the ivy had been pulled off the Church and cracks in the walls made visible, a *Mercury* correspondent wondered whether the exfoliation had been a good idea and suggested that further work should be carried out on the building in time for its centenary in 1937.[166]

In essence, the Scenery Preservation Board passed the responsibility for Port Arthur to the Tasman Council in the year that tourism to Tasmania was at its lowest ebb. For over a decade, the Board was almost inactive, and content to accept that the

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160 AB541/2, *Correspondence of the Tasman Municipal Council: PWD*: Director of PWD to Council Clerk, Tasman Council, 6 December 1928.

161 AB541/1, *Correspondence of the Tasman Municipal Council: Politicians*: Director of Public Works to James Murdoch MLC, 15 July 1929.

162 *Ibid.*: Council Clerk to Murdoch, 4 August 1930 and Director of PWD to Murdoch, 8 September 1930.

163 AB541/2, *Correspondence of the Tasman Municipal Council: PWD*: Council Clerk to Director of PWD, 30 November 1931.

164 *Ibid.*: Director of PWD to Council Clerk, 29 January 1932.

165 *Ibid.*: Director of PWD to Council Clerk, 7 August 1933 and 15 September 1933.

166 MERCURY, 15 February 1933.

council was managing Port Arthur adequately. But through lack of funds, lack of expertise and lack of concern, the unstable ruins continued to decay. Nevertheless, they were the economic life blood for the Carnarvon residents and their commodification continued.

4.5 PORT ARTHUR – 'AUSTRALIA'S ONLY *BONA FIDE* CONVICT RUINS'

The development of Port Arthur trod water until the Depression lifted. It was, however, widely advertised and its reputation spread. Commonly, it was referred to, inaccurately, as 'Australia's only *bona fide* convict ruins'.[167] Generally, Tasmanians seemed to have become more inclined to accept the exploitation of the site, although periodically there were still those who wrote to the press calling for its destruction. The arguments used differed little from those employed in the nineteenth century: the continued presence of Port Arthur was seen as a 'blot on the landscape'; it reflected poorly on the British Empire; it was a monument to shame and cruelty; it pandered to morbid desires, and it only remained as a source of commercial profit.[168] Such letters hailed both from Tasmanians and from visitors, and they were countered by other letters explaining why the ruins should be retained. Again, these emanated almost equally from Tasmanians and from visitors. As a mark of official acceptance, the town's name was changed back from Carnarvon to Port Arthur in October 1927, the Secretary of State writing to the Premiers of the other states advising them of the change.

Support of the locals for the exploitation of the site was indicated by the formation in 1927 of the Port Arthur Tourist and Progress Association, the primary goal of which was the development of Port Arthur as a tourist mecca. It was fully aware of the importance of the ruins and their management, and it regularly dispatched letters to Tasman Council highly critical of the way in which the reserves were being run. Attention was drawn to the state of the Church, the condition of the tracks, the presence of undergrowth, geese on the green, and so forth.[169]

Though it is possible that there was a body of residents opposed to the site's exploitation, only one example has come to light. This was Miss M Woollnough,

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167 For instance: TASMANIAN GOVERNMENT TOURIST DEPARTMENT, 1918, *op. cit.*, 30.

168 A sample of such letters appeared in the following editions of the MERCURY: 29 September 1921, 20 January 1922, 19 December 1922.

169 NS 1086/1, *Minutes of the Port Arthur Tourist and Progress Association and* AB541/3, *Correspondence of the Tasman Municipal Council: Tourism, passim.*

daughter of the late Reverend, who in 1925 wrote to the Tasman Council protesting against its plan to take over the Port Arthur reserves and exploit their tourist potential. 'It's pandering to a morbid taste on part of a section of the public', she wrote.[170]

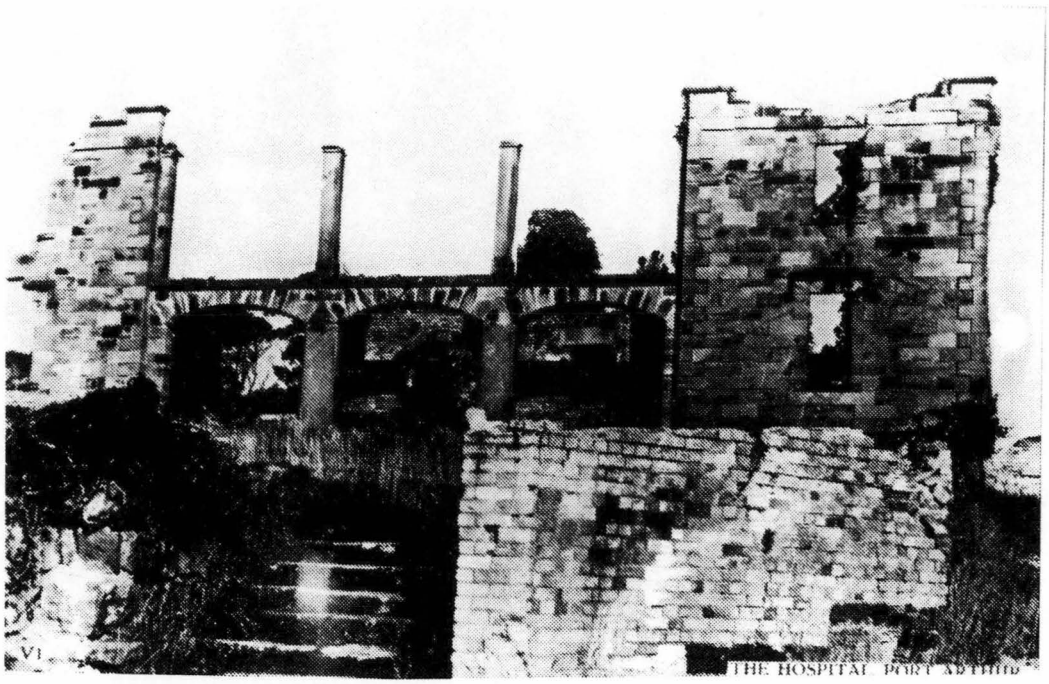

FIGURE 4.5

'AUSTRALIA'S ONLY *BONA FIDE* CONVICT RUINS' – HOSPITAL

Reliable figures for visitors to Port Arthur are only available after the turnstile was placed at the Model Prison in 1925, and even these figures can be questioned for, in the opinion of L Kerslake, Chairman of the Port Arthur Tourist and Progress Association, it could safely be assumed that at least 1,000 other visitors did not pass through.[171] The figures which have survived suggest a healthy level of visitation, which nevertheless declined with the deepening of the Depression. In 1928/29, 7,028 people passed through the turnstile, and in 1933/34, there were 5,775,[172] a number not greatly in excess of the 1912 estimate of 5,000.

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170 AB541/1, *Correspondence of the Tasman Municipal Council: Building*: Woollnough to Council Clerk, 4 October 1925.

171 MERCURY, 24 July 1936. Kerslake was using figures to support the arguments of a deputation seeking federal funding for improvements to the road to Port Arthur. It is therefore not beyond the bounds of possibility that his estimate of tourist numbers might have erred on the generous side.

172 AA264, *Minutes of the Scenery Preservation Board*, Annual Report 1929 and Annual Report 1934.

For those who chose to stay overnight on the Peninsula, a range of accommodation was available. In 1915, there were two guest houses.[173] These were augmented in 1918 by the Hotel Arthur, newly adapted from the Junior Medical Officer's Residence of convict days and boasting all modern comforts including electric light; it accommodated 40 people for 12/- a day.[174] In 1922, the Commandant's House once more opened its doors to guests; it could hold 22 at 10/- each.[175] Thereafter, for the greater part of the 1920s and 1930s the visitor to Port Arthur had the choice of three or four places to stay. In 1926, for example, there were three, which could provide between them 88 beds.[176] Of these, the Hotel Arthur was the only one with a liquor licence.

The site's attractions were augmented in the early 1930s by the addition of two museums. Port Arthur's storekeeper, William Radcliffe, opened one as a sideline to exhibit the convict relics which he literally dug up around his property.[177] To this he added W Williamson's "Old Curiosity Shop" collection, which the latter was still running in 1930 at the age of 81.[178] Once he had added Williamson's collection to his own, Radcliffe's museum contained over 500 prison exhibits.[179]

Radcliffe's museum was not the only one at Port Arthur. Mr Eldridge, who owned the Powder Magazine until he sold it to Radcliffe in 1936, used the building to house a 'collection' which he charged visitors to inspect. The tower's visitor book suggests that he did well.[180] What became of his collection when he closed the tower to visitors is not clear. It may well have been bought by Radcliffe along with the building.

No guide book to the Port Arthur buildings was available until the end of the 1930s, and the only books available on the site's history were Beattie's. One was his

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173 TASMANIAN GOVERNMENT TOURIST DEPARTMENT, 1915, *op. cit.*

174 TASMANIAN GOVERNMENT TOURIST DEPARTMENT, 1918; *Tasmanian Motorists' Comprehensive Road Guide*; Government Printer, Hobart, 30 and RIEUSSET, B, 1991; Filming the "Term", *Tasman Peninsula Chronicle* 6, 3-22.

175 TASMANIAN GOVERNMENT TOURIST DEPARTMENT, 1922; *Accommodation Directory 1921-1922*; Government Printer, Hobart and RIEUSSET, *op. cit.*

176 RIEUSSET, *op. cit.*

177 'I ... have unearthed from my own property leg irons up to 30lb in weight. Recently the men working at the old Government quarry unearthed leg irons and gadgets of all descriptions.' (MERCURY, 19 May 1939; letter from W Radcliffe.)

178 MERCURY, 13 December 1930.

179 RADCLIFFE, undated; *The Port Arthur Guide*; Radcliffe, Port Arthur.

180 NS 1111/1, *Visitors' Book for PA Tower.*

Glimpses of the History of Port Arthur, which was basically a reprint of the earlier *Port Arthur, Van Diemen's Land*. The other was his collection of slides and lecture notes on Port Arthur, which was also marketed. In 1927, he remarked that this set 'seems to be the standard Port Arthur seller, and we dispose of a great number of them during the season'.[181]

In the absence of more thorough work, it may be assumed that most visitors' interpretations of the buildings were mediated *via* the patter of the guides. Officially, tourists were only allowed to inspect the buildings in the guides' company. The little detail which remains of their techniques throughout this period suggests that they were sensational, inflexible, inaccurate and cursory. However, the evidence is not entirely consistent.

The best remembered guide was Alf Maule, who worked until 1939, when, as a very old man, he was finally pensioned off.[182] He developed his own patter which never varied.[183] His technique was described by the naturalist, Charles Barrett:

> Nothing could stop him, once he had started off with his amusing patter, standing heels together and feet placed in the correct quarter-to-four position. Alf was word perfect with each of his pocket histories: one for the prison building, one for the penitentiary, one for the church – one for every relic on his list.[184]

Little detail is available to indicate the content of the guides' descriptions of the site. The few general comments which have survived suggest that the tone was lurid. A visitor in 1934 described Maule's account as 'one long chapter of horror', and urged the government to 'see to it that the old man who so glibly retails this terrible chapter of history is allowed to do so no more'.[185] However, George Porter formed a different opinion:

> The guides appeared to me to be a superior class of men. They resolutely discountenance any sensational embroidery. They are old men, who have acquired much knowledge from ex-warders and instructors who in former years were in the habit of revisiting the spot.[186]

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181 TASSELL and WOOD, *op. cit.*, 11.

182 AA597, *Minute Book of the Port Arthur and Eaglehawk Neck Reserves Board*, 27 April 1939.

183 The Port Arthur school children, who overheard the guides when they passed through the school grounds, 'could quote every word that the guides told the tourists as their story never varied' (NOYE, K, 1991; School Days at the Port, *Tasman Peninsula Chronicle* **6**, 28-42).

184 BARRETT, *op. cit.*, 183.

185 MERCURY, 31 November 1934.

186 PORTER, *op. cit.*, 143.

Despite the conflicting evidence, the guides, it may be assumed, told the tourists what they thought they wished to hear. Thus widely believed myths, such as the Point Puer double suicide, were perpetuated. Other tales were invented or adapted to suit the taste or knowledge of the guide in question, thus inconsistencies arose. A tourist bus driver, who had long studied the work of the guides, eventually brought this to the attention of the Tasman Council:

> For instance when telling the story of the Church – and the reason for it not being consecrated – Alf tells them two prisoners fought in the tower and one killed the other. Harry tells them two prisoners quarrelled while building the outer wall –"points to the place" – and one pushed the other who fell and broke his neck. Joe tells them he doesn't know – so he doesn't tell them anything about it – and so the tale runs on. There are very many things that are stated by guides that do not tally.[187]

FIGURE 4.6

PORT ARTHUR GUIDES (MAULE, FREE AND FRERK)

Overall, it seems that, apart from those who directly made money out of Port Arthur, few cared how it was preserved, managed or interpreted. It was generally, if reluctantly, accepted that the old penal settlement was central to the island's tourist trade, but with that trade in decline, there was little incentive for the government to invest more money or thought in the site's presentation. It had taken crises in 1889 and 1913 to make it a subject of topical debate. In the latter half of

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187 AB541/3, *Correspondence of the Tasman Municipal Council: Tourism*: Hildyard to Tasman Council, 12 March 1937.

the 1920s, there were two further crises, both related to Port Arthur, both demanding government decisions and both widely debated in the community. In each case, market forces determined the outcomes, and in both cases Tasmanians came closer to accepting the convict past – not just as an economic resource but as part of a common heritage.

The first crisis was caused by the news that a film was about to be made of *For the Term of His Natural Life,* the second by the news that John Beattie's museum was up for sale and might be lost to the state. In both cases the government was strongly urged to act.

4.6 TOWARDS ACCEPTANCE OF THE CONVICT PAST

4.6.1 'A very bad advertisement for Tasmania'

News that the Union-Australian Company proposed to film *For the Term of his Natural Life* on location in Tasmania in 1926 polarised the community in an interesting way. It would appear that the 1908 film provoked little if any opposition, and it is likely that the welter of protests against the 1926 project arose partly from a realisation that, by the late 1920s, film had developed into a potent international medium, and partly from the acute sensitivities felt by Tasmanians as they struggled to keep abreast of progress in a fast moving post-war world.

The Royal Society was among the first organisations to voice its objections to the proposed film. The motion calling for a protest, however, was only won by a small majority. In the vanguard of the attack was Clive Lord, abetted by W Crowther and Bishop Hay.[188] The Royal Society believed that the film would be 'a very bad advertisement for Tasmania'. In this view, it was staunchly supported by the *Mercury* which felt that the film, if made, would broadcast throughout the world an 'outrageous lie' about Tasmania, thereby 'creating hatred where all should desire good-will'.[189]

When state cabinet met to consider a possible ban on filming, the Premier, Joseph Lyons, was absent, recovering from an accident. Since Lyons, when Minister for Education in the Earle government in 1914, had destroyed convict records which he

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188 For detail on the political reaction to the film of *The Term,* I am indebted to Michael Roe's thorough essay, *Vandiemenism Debated: The Filming of His Natural Life,* 1989, *op. cit.* (See page 172 n87 above.)

189 MERCURY, 5 August 1926 and 27 July 1926.

found in his office,[190] one wonders what the cabinet decision might have been had he been present.[191] In the project's favour, the government felt, was the impetus it might give to the local film industry. Dwyer-Gray, a government Minister, supported the project and in the paper he edited, the *Voice*, said he believed that through the film, 'the world [would] come to learn a little about Tasmania'.[192] But, prophetically, it was Albert Ogilvie, Attorney-General in the Lyons government, who 'virtually claimed to have persuaded cabinet not to impede the film'.[193]

The filming at Port Arthur occupied the first three weeks of September. It put nearly £360 in the till of Lindsay Kerslake, proprietor of the Hotel Arthur, and employed up to 60 locals for several days as extras. For this they were paid £1 per day, a substantial improvement on their regular daily wage of 3/-.[194]

FIGURE 4.7

SYLVIA CONSOLES TOMMY AND BILLY

Although it was well outside the tourist season, the filming drew crowds to the Peninsula. The *Mercury* announced special excursions by sea to Taranna, bus tours

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190 National Library of Australia, Lyons Papers, MS4852, Box 229, folder 2, J A Lyons to E Burrell, 30 October 1914. From ROBSON, 1991, *op. cit.*, 288.

191 A question also asked by Roe (1989, *op. cit.*).

192 VOICE, 7 August 1926.

193 ROE, 1989, *op. cit.*

194 RIEUSSET, *op. cit.*

were provided and hire cars to Port Arthur did a roaring trade. John Beattie assisted in the project by helping the director achieve an authentic look for the film. Local radio and press, eventually even the *Mercury*, gave the proceedings enthusiastic coverage. The filming at Port Arthur was celebrated with a gala dance, which was attended by the entire film company in period costume, and most of the Peninsula residents.[195] A few days later in Launceston the film's female star, Eva Novak, was provided with a reception.

The film received its premiere in Newcastle, NSW, in June 1927. It followed the novel fairly closely, although its ending, with Dawes and Sylvia adrift on a raft of wreckage, was more ambiguous than Clarke's version. The dark side of the novel was only shirked in the predictable avoidance of references to homosexuality; floggings, sadism and suicide were graphically presented.

After enjoying reasonable success in Newcastle and Sydney, *Term* opened in Hobart on 29 August 1927. The *Mercury* felt that it would 'provide propaganda for Bolsheviks and others who hated the Empire';[196] Bishop Hay was concerned that it would diminish respect for the British among any 'more or less primitive native peoples' who saw it.[197] Tasmanians, however, made their own judgement. The film was screened in Hobart for one week. Two matinees were given daily at His Majesty's theatre, and at night the large City Hall was the venue. Every performance was packed. It was even advertised that:

> Owing to extraordinary demands from country centres to witness *The Term*, SPECIAL TRAINS, SPECIAL BOATS, SPECIAL MOTORS, at reduced fares and special running times were being arranged.[198]

Despite the concern of Tasmania's moral guardians, the Education Department, 'realising the tremendous historical and educational value' of the film, permitted school children to see it at special afternoon matinee performances.[199]

The popular interest in the *Term* may be regarded as an echo of the interest generated by the stage versions presented regularly in the 1880s and 1890s. In the latter, it will be remembered, both the novel's violence and its uncompromisingly bleak ending were much toned down. The film was considerably more faithful to both the book and the horrors of the period. No doubt it was fears of such fidelity

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195 RIEUSSET, *op. cit.*

196 MERCURY, 5 September 1927, cited in ROE, 1989, *op. cit.*

197 MAIL, 21 September 1927, cited in ROE, 1989, *op. cit.*

198 RIEUSSET, *op. cit.*

199 *Ibid.*

which provoked the pre-production opposition to the project. This opposition came principally from the bourgeois intellectual elite, the conservative press and the more timid members of Lyons' Labor cabinet. Finally, the film was provided with a seal of official approval at the opening performance, which was given in the presence of the new Governor, Sir James O'Grady.

It would have been interesting to investigate the extent to which the film of *Term* shaped international perceptions of Tasmania and thereby influenced its role as a destination for those bent upon historical tourism. Unfortunately, "talkies" arrived just in time to destroy the film's chance of international success. It was given a short season in America and none in England. Whether it was seen by any 'primitive native peoples' is not recorded.

4.6.2 Heritage for sale

Until 1927, all Tasmania's notable historical collections were in private hands. They were thus highly vulnerable to theft and overseas sale. Williamson's collection, for example, was uninsured,[200] and Beattie's exhibits were not displayed in glass cases. On at least one occasion, attention was drawn to the risk of theft. The suggestion was made that they should be acquired by government.[201]

The Tasmanian Museum could not afford its own historical collection. Successive governments starved it of funds. In 1916, it was without a curator, and there was no money with which to hire one. The following year, the annual grant was raised by £100 to £600 and the 29 year-old Clive Lord was appointed to the post. That year, an overdraft was incurred, some of which was wiped off in 1919 when the grant was raised by a further £100. Visitors during that year numbered 60,500.[202]

It was in 1919 that Lord informed the Royal Society that Beattie's collection might soon be offered for sale, adding that it would be 'a very great pity if it were allowed to go out of the state instead of being deposited in the museum of the Royal Society'.[203] No funds were made available for the purchase, although in 1920 the museum's grant was raised to £800. It was still far from sufficient. Exhibits were

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200 MERCURY, 13 December 1930.

201 MERCURY, 24 October 1922.

202 Tasmanian Museum annual reports: JPP 1916/70, 1918/45 and 1919/19.

203 MERCURY, 15 July 1919.

deteriorating, they could neither be properly catalogued nor safeguarded and although valued at £100,000 were only insured for £14,000.[204]

Parliament indicated its priorities that year when the Standing Committee on Public Works proposed that the museum building be extended to house a War Trophies Museum. This plan was costed but three years later abandoned as too expensive.[205] Meanwhile, the vote was increased gradually to £1,225 by 1922. This was still insufficient to hire enough staff to prevent pilfering, but it did enable a small section of the Beattie museum to be acquired. This dealt particularly with Tasmanian Aborigines, but Lord did feel sufficiently confident that year to announce plans for a 'Tasmanian historical gallery', believing that '[s]uch an exhibition [would] serve to arouse interest in Tasmanian History, and be a means of securing further presentations'.[206]

There can be no doubting Lord's own commitment to local history. Although he was trained as an architect and made his life's work the natural history of Tasmania, he had a passion for historical subjects. Several of the papers he delivered to the Royal Society have already been noted.[207] He also found time in 1920 to write *The Early Explorers of Tasmania*, which became a standard work. Credit may also be given to him for the eventual creation of the Museum's Tasmanian Ethnological and Historical Gallery, which in fact featured exhibits primarily in the former category. However, in his bid to obtain Beattie's "Port Arthur Museum" for Hobart, Lord failed. As usual, the reason was financial.

Beattie's collection continued to grow after the First World War. Apart from its general convict items – leg irons, nooses, and so on – there were many exhibits for which connection was claimed with historical characters of note. Thus, there was John Price's iron punishment brand, Mathew Brady's slingshot, Alexander Pearce's axe and, in a glass case, his skull.[208] This extraordinary collection was open during the tourist season from 9am to 9.30pm.[209] Visitors averaged over 100 per day, reaching 200 at the height of the season. By 1926, they could view 2,200 exhibits. These included more than 160 pictures, 75 of them oils, by artists such as Glover, Prout, Forrest and Gould; 200-300 pieces of china, glassware, alabaster and marble;

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204 JPP 1920/19 and WORLD, 5 October 1920.

205 JPP 1920/53 and 1923/8.

206 JPP 1922/9.

207 See page 173 n89 above.

208 CRITIC, 8 February 1918.

209 COME TO TASMANIA STATE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE, *op. cit.*, advertisement.

and a collection of antique furniture including the Franklins' dining room suite. The historical collection, which formed the core of the museum, was far broader than Beattie's chosen name for the museum suggested, and contained many items which related to the island's early governors, pioneers and seafarers. A South Australian Legislative Councillor judged that, in a century's time, the collection would be priceless. He felt it would be 'unpardonable to allow it pass into the hands of some wealthy globetrotter'.[210]

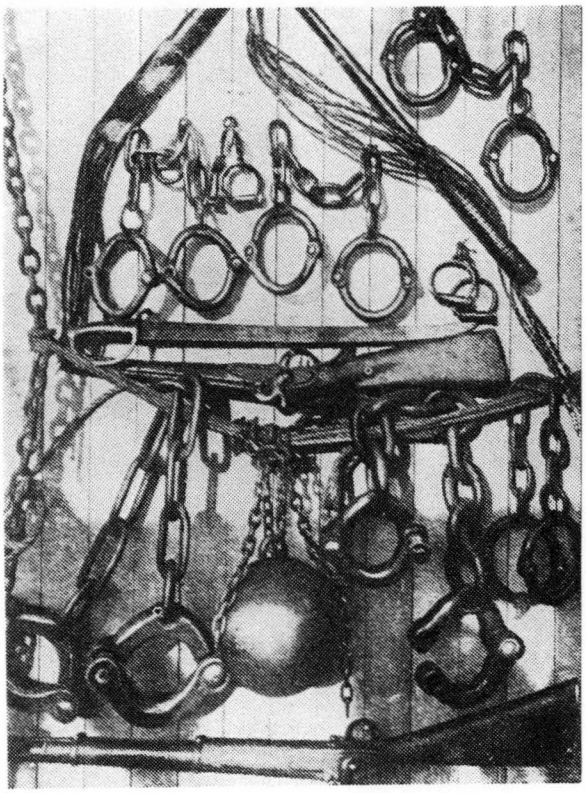

FIGURE 4.8

EXHIBITS FROM THE BEATTIE COLLECTION

In fact, Beattie made several attempts to interest the Hobart Corporation in the acquisition of his collection, it being his idea that it should ultimately be housed in the Lady Franklin Museum.[211] As Lord put it, the Corporation 'apparently did not realise the wonderful opportunity offered them'.[212]

In 1926, Beattie was suffering from 'old age and varicose veins'.[213] He also believed he was not popular in Hobart, having fallen victim to the jealousy of others less

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210 EXAMINER, 24 September 1927, p9.

211 MERCURY, 25 June 1930; *Death of Mr J W Beattie.*

212 EXAMINER, 24 September 1927, p9.

213 D1/419/114/3/26: Beattie to Freeman, 16 April 1926.

successful.[214] With reason, he believed that he had performed a considerable service for his state over the years and was entitled to some recompense. He valued his collection conservatively at £6,000 and asked the firm of solicitors, Freeman, Duff & Co., to place it on offer to the Museum's trustees.[215] Lord was enthusiastic, but as usual there was no money. Beattie dropped his price to £5,000, and the noted collector, Henry Allport, interceded on his behalf with the Lyons government. It was to no avail. The Chief Secretary wrote back regretting that since the Museum had just been refused an additional wing to house its art gallery, 'the question of housing the contents of Mr Beattie's museum would be a difficult one'. Although he would personally regret to see the collection leave the state, there was nothing he could do.[216] Since Beattie had been offered £3,000 by a prospective interstate buyer for one section of the collection alone, the risk of its being split up and scattered was very real.[217]

Beattie, however, wanted the collection to remain in his home state. He immediately dropped his price by a further £500 and offered the collection to the Queen Victoria Museum, which was controlled and financed by Launceston City Council and received only "top up" funding from the state government.[218] The council, which had been unable to consider purchasing the collection at its original asking price of £6,000,[219] scented a bargain and was quick to act. A valuer was sent to Hobart, and he reported the collection to be worth £10,000. H H Scott, the Curator of the Queen Victoria Museum, and those Aldermen who had not seen the collection, travelled south in order to do so. They were impressed. A holding deposit was paid to Beattie until the council could vote on the matter. Meanwhile, the Launceston *Examiner* was enthusiastic in its support for the purchase.[220]

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214 PORTER, *op. cit.*, 73.

215 PD1/419/114/3/26 contains the relevant correspondence.

216 CSD 22/323/108/2/27: Chief Secretary to Allport, 17 August 1927.

217 This was explained by H H Scott in an address given to the 50,000 League (EXAMINER, 31 July 1928).

218 In a typical example of north/south rivalry, this policy was questioned in parliament in 1920 by F P Hart, who thought it unfair that the "Hobart Museum" was awarded £1,000 and the "Launceston Museum" only £250. Hart had the different administrative structures of the two museums explained to him. He was told that as an Alderman of Launceston he should have known this anyway. He still thought the funding arrangements inequitable (MERCURY, 20 November 1920 and 30 November 1920).

219 EXAMINER, 31 July 1928.

220 Launceston City Council correspondence file: Town Clerk to Freeman, Duff & Co., 13 September 1927 and 22 September 1927. EXAMINER, 24 September 1927 and 27 September 1927.

The crucial council meeting took place on 26 September 1927. The councillors had had six weeks to consider the matter. Alderman Hart, in moving the motion to purchase, made the key point: 'We do want something to keep tourists in our city, and the museum will be of immense value to us from this point of view'.[221] But before a vote could be taken, an important misconception had to be cleared up. Alderman James, in seconding the motion, introduced the theme:

> The collection has been referred to as the Beattie Port Arthur Museum, but he would like citizens to realise that the collection was more than a collection of Port Arthur relics. It was really a very fine gathering of pieces connected with the early history of Tasmania.

The Mayor backed him up:

> The collection did not represent a chamber of horrors as some might be prone to believe.

And Scott explained:

> For commercial purposes the morbid aspects of the early history of Tasmania has been kept in the foreground, but this is quite unnecessary and undesirable, and the bulk of the collection really does not of necessity support such a method of displaying.

That out of the way, the council voted unanimously to complete the purchase. Within days, visitors turned up at the Museum expecting to see the collection in place. Some were impatient when it was not. Scott, however, refused to be rushed. For the successful exhibition of such an important collection, he believed, a special building with special fittings was absolutely necessary'.[222] It was hoped to have the collection ready for inspection by January 1928.[223]

It took three people a fortnight to pack the 20 tonnes of exhibits.[224] It took far longer to adapt the section of the Junior Technical School, which was specially acquired to house the collection.[225] In fact, it was not until May 1928 that the first sub-section of the exhibits, about one eighth of the whole, was officially opened. The display was devoted to:

> the intimate home life of early Tasmanian settlers.... There [was] nothing of the penal element about it, except that it stimulate[d]

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221 EXAMINER, 27 September 1927, p9.

222 EXAMINER, 1 October 1927, p11.

223 EXAMINER, 30 September, p6.

224 EXAMINER, 23 March 1928, p9.

225 EXAMINER, 11 November 1927.

> one's recollection of the high standard of craftsmanship to be found in Tasmania in those days among victims of the "system".[226]

The *Examiner* placed the significance of the display in its proper social perspective:

> History has too often been written in terms of kings, queens, and wars, while the real lives of the people, their struggles and successes, have not only found no ready scribe, but have generally gone down into silence. But with a well listed and properly exhibited museum collection, this state of things can be readily avoided. Here, then, it is that Launceston's special purchase forges its way to the fore.[227]

Despite this suggestion that the display would have a "folk" or "vernacular" flavour, however, a 'tour round the cases' given in the *Examiner* a few days later suggests that many if not most of the exhibits were once owned by the colony's early governors.[228]

Scott received general praise for his painstaking and tasteful work, not least from Clive Lord, who travelled to Launceston for the opening. Lord also generously congratulated the northern city on securing for Tasmania what the south had foolishly passed over.

Amid the euphoria which characterised the opening, it was not recognised just how much work would still be entailed in exhibiting the Beattie collection, and how this would come to dominate all the Museum's activities. In all, the collection was expected to occupy nine rooms. It was hoped that three more would be opened by the summer of 1928. These would house early Tasmanian art, Port Arthur relics and 'casts of noted criminals of the old days'.[229] By January 1929 items in the collection were stored at five centres in Launceston, though Scott still felt that excellent progress had been made in arranging the display.[230] By the end of the year, he admitted that the work of the Beattie collection had so absorbed his time that he was neglecting other aspects of his work.[231] By September 1931, half of the collection was still filling storehouses.[232] It is also probable that the cost of the

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226 EXAMINER, 12 May 1928, p8.

227 EXAMINER, 10 May 1928, p7.

228 EXAMINER, 14 May 1928.

229 EXAMINER, 19 October 1928, p8.

230 Queen Victoria Museum Annual Report 1927/28, 8 January 1929.

231 Queen Victoria Museum Annual Report 1928/29, 25 November 1929.

232 Queen Victoria Museum Annual Report 1930/31, 29 September 1931.

acquisition of the Beattie collection forced the Museum to economise in other areas.[233]

It is difficult to know to what extent the Beattie collection attracted tourists to Launceston or caused them to extend their stay in the city. The city's 50,000 League (which stood above all for civic pride)[234] retained its enthusiasm for the purchase, not least one feels because of the 'astonishment and regret' which they believed it caused the citizens of Hobart.[235] Through the 1930s, tourist guide books drew attention to the collection. Dyer in 1933 advised tourists to visit the collection and so see 'the whole social life of early Tasmania in small compass and under delightful conditions'. Yet still only half of the exhibits had been unpacked.[236] Four years later, Critchley Parker described the collection as being 'of exceptional interest to visitors to Tasmania'.[237] Over the summer of 1938/39, guided tours to the collection were provided at 10.30am and 2.30pm daily, a service that was featured by the Government Tourist Bureau in its Tasmanian itineraries. The Museum's Annual Report for that year stated that: 'The importance of the Beattie collection ... can scarcely be overestimated. Information gained by personal contacts shows it to be a very important factor in attracting tourists to the State, and in leading them to prolong their stay in Launceston'.[238]

No statistics exist to confirm this claim, which was made by the Museum's new Director, E O G Scott, son of the late H H Scott, who had died in office in 1938 after forty years as curator. While it might be prudent to treat Scott Jr's claim with some caution, it may nevertheless be noted that the guided tours were continued the following year, and their eventual discontinuation resulted from wartime stringencies rather than from lack of interest.

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233 Although little evidence exists to confirm this, a telling letter exists from the Launceston Town Clerk to a lady offering the Museum a pair of duelling pistols for £30. He wrote: 'owing to expense incurred in purchasing Beattie's Historical Collection, your offer cannot be entertained' (Launceston City Council correspondence file: Town Clerk to Mrs G C Chapman, 30 September 1927). It was hoped by the LCC that the cost of purchase could be written off over ten years (EXAMINER, 27 September 1927), and possible that the Museum's acquisition policy was affected over this time.

234 The role of the the 50,000 League in relation to historical tourism is dealt with in Chapter 5.

235 50,000 LEAGUE, undated, *Launceston, the Northern Capital of Tasmania and Why;* Launceston, 25.

236 DYER, *op. cit.*, 103.

237 PARKER, *op. cit.*, 145.

238 Queen Victoria Museum Annual Report 1938/39.

Meanwhile in Hobart, the aging Beattie, who claimed to be 'losing his punch', was still being offered antiques.[239] Almost against his will, it seems, he began to build up another collection. By the time of his death in 1930 at the age of 69, it was substantial. For this collection, there was to be no waiting round while governments vacillated. An option on it was secured immediately by William Walker, the philanthropist whose book collection formed the basis of the Hobart library. Walker, who died shortly after Beattie, donated the "second Beattie collection" to the Tasmanian Museum on the condition that the Hobart City Council provide £250 to complete the purchase. He made his stipulation because:

> in the first place, he felt the citizens as a whole would wish to be linked in a movement to secure this famous collection, and secondly, it would give a lead to civic interest as regards the public institutions of the capital city.[240]

At the subsequent council debate, Alderman Watkins stated that he believed there was a lack of public spirit in the community and that the money should be raised by public subscription; Alderman Park said he would not 'give tuppence' for the collection. For the remaining aldermen, doubts were vanquished by the official valuation of the collection at £1,700. It was agreed to make the £250 available.[241]

But there remained a further problem, one of space. Eventually, in 1935, the Port Arthur Room at the Tasmanian Museum was created by scrapping the geological collection, a move carried out much to the disgust of the Museum's new Director, Dr Joseph Pearson, who had taken over from Lord on the latter's untimely death in 1933.[242]

The exhibits in the second Beattie collection included numerous relics from Port Arthur, Point Puer and the Cascades womens' prison as well as 'a host of ... documents, pictures, photos, sketches, etchings and paintings of the greatest historical interest'.[243] It was stated by the *Mercury* that some people felt that these relics were 'not the type that should be shown in a museum',[244] and the Governor of Tasmania, in officially opening the exhibition in the presence of 'a large and distinguished gathering' did find it necessary to remind his listeners 'that the exhibits in the room were records of a period of great cruelty in the treatment of

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239 PORTER, *op. cit.*, 73.

240 MERCURY, 22 May 1933.

241 MERCURY, 13 June 1933.

242 MERCURY, 25 May 1935.

243 *Ibid.*

244 MERCURY, 24 May 1935.

prisoners, not only in Tasmania and England, but over the whole world'.[245] The writer of the *Mercury* column "Day by Day" found this 'by the way'. For him:

> The real thing of importance [was] the indication of new life in the Museum and the promise of an institution whose value and use will become increasingly greater.[246]

In fact, "Day by Day"'s predictions were borne out. The Museum appointed an education officer who each year gave lectures and demonstrations to over six hundred children, and new exhibits were rapidly acquired.[247] It would probably be an overstatement to ascribe the renewed activity at the Tasmanian Museum directly to Walker's unexpected gift, yet there are very strong grounds for regarding it as a major catalyst. Thus, paradoxically, re-awakened interest in the past stimulated investment in the future.

4.7 SUMMARY

The years 1914 to 1934 represent a static period in the development of Tasmania's historical tourism industry. Seeds were planted – but they remained dormant. The Scenery Preservation Board, for instance, was founded. Although, according to its historian, G Castles, it was 'all but defunct' between 1922 and 1938,[248] it still had the potential to acquire and conserve the state's historic sites. Port Arthur buildings were also reserved by the state between 1914 and 1934. There was potential for the government to take a pro-active role in their conservation and interpretation, but all that happened was entirely reactive, and inadequate to boot.

Money was part of the problem. Economic constraints throughout the period limited opportunities for initiative. But there was also a lack of imagination displayed by governments of both persuasions. The conservatives were content to function as the state's managers; Labor, under both Earle and Lyons, tried its best to show that it could manage just as well. To ensure that it achieved no more, the upper house remained in place, as entrenched and conservative as ever.

The tightness and lack of imagination in government permeated the community. The radicalism of the late nineteenth century Left, illustrated by the cheeky journalism

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245 MERCURY, 25 May 1935.

246 MERCURY, 27 May 1935.

247 JPP 1939/26; *Proposed Additions to the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery.*

248 CASTLES, *op. cit.*, 44.

of the *Clipper*, was born of a social movement poised on the brink of seizing power. Realisation of the limitations of that power once achieved blunted radicalism's edge. The self-confidence of the Right fared no better. Its cocky pre-war jingoism was ousted by a humbled post-war realisation that on the one hand a land fit for heroes had not been created, and that, on the other, a Bolshevik monster had, looming over the decadent West as both a threat and a challenge.

In such times, reflection on the past was not easy. Admission of the evils of a convict past, as Bishop Hay feared, could 'provide propaganda for Bolsheviks'. The invention of an alternative, more inspirational, past could only be accomplished in a present which also inspired. In the depressed and hope-denuded world of the 1920s and early '30s, that inspiration was not at hand. Consequently, the work of the period's historians centred round the po-faced hunt for recondite facts. Interpretation and the discovery of significance were shunned.

This bias also coloured the approach to ethnology. Aboriginal bones were scrupulously measured, and those measurements presented to the Royal Society in learned papers,[249] but questions concerning the scientific significance of the measurements, it seems, were not asked. Neither were questions about their historical significance. Clive Lord's discovery of twenty skulls ranging from that of a two year-old to that of someone in old age, for instance, interested him only from the point of view of its 'extreme value from an ethnological standpoint'.[250] Questions concerning the possible circumstances of the death of the group appear not to have concerned him. Tourists, however, had different priorities. George Porter, after being told of the find by an Eaglehawk Neck resident, expressed curiosity about the mass death. He was told: 'Oh, rounded up and knocked on the heads by a guard, I suppose', and felt disgusted by the 'dreadfully complacent epitaph on the wanton destruction of a small tribe of defenceless blacks'.[251]

There are parallels between the work of the Royal Society and Nazi "science". In both cases, obsessive measurement replaced genuine inquiry. Both regarded human bodies, especially the bodies of "inferior races", essentially as objects, devoid of cultural associations. Both suppressed concern for the significance of human feelings. What was significant in both cases was the act of measuring. It endorsed

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249 For an example of the way in which such measurements were presented, see, for example, CROWTHER, W L and LORD, C, 1921; Description of Two Aboriginal Crania, *Royal Society of Tasmania Papers and Proceedings 1921*, 168-173.

250 LORD, C E, 1918; Preliminary Note upon the Discovery of a Number of Tasmanian Aboriginal Remains at Eaglehawk Neck, *Royal Society of Tasmania Papers and Proceedings 1918*, 118-119.

251 PORTER, *op. cit.*, 150.

the authority of the measurer. He was the scientist, the master. He was not, in Plumb's terms, using the *past* to sanction his status so much as denying its significance to achieve precisely the same end. Against such a strategy, history could only be subversive. One imagines that if Lord read Porter's lines, he would have been deeply upset by them.

The most striking example of the fear which Tasmania's bourgeois elite had of being upset by revelations about their island's past is provided by the Royal Society's horrified response to the proposed filming of *For The Term of His Natural Life.* It is revealing that this response was not shared by working class Tasmanians. Their support for the film, it may be surmised, sprang from their recognition that, however sensationalised it was, it still encompassed an element of their heritage. It is likely that some members of Lyons' cabinet also believed this, but just as likely that their support for the film was driven mainly by pragmatic concerns. For instance, far from being worried about the bad advertisement the film might be for Tasmania, the Chief Secretary endeavoured to persuade Union-Australian to precede the main feature with a short film advertising Tasmanian products and scenery.[252]

The debates over the purchases of the two Beattie collections also illustrate convincingly the victory of economic pragmatism over ideological considerations. The value of both collections, in cash terms and in terms of their potential to attract tourists, were what ultimately prompted the two city councils to complete their transactions. The cultural significance of the collection to Tasmanians hardly received a mention. That it had such a significance cannot be doubted. Evidence of this is provided by a long article on the collection in the *Critic* in 1918. It describes how the records were carefully arranged to show the stages of a convict's career: from trivial offence to inappropriate punishment, to hardening, to institutionalisation; and how the severity of the regime was revealed through display of 'relics of torture ... neatly docketed and arranged'. The article concludes:

> Every Tasmanian who wishes to post himself up in the early history of his native land should visit the museum. There is a mass of material relating to the early days which form the first links in our chain of history. Today a more distant perspective has modified our line of vision. The social outcasts of England, who first landed on our shores, have, in large measure, been misunderstood. Anyhow, they assisted materially to pioneer the

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252 The Chief Minister was unsuccessful, for Union Australia found the proposal impractical and overseas audiences were left with the feature film alone to form their impressions of Tasmania (EXAMINER, 24 September 1927, p9).

> State, and their efforts may be seen indelibly impressed on some of our most useful industries and institutions.[253]

What the author is saying is close to Hay's definition of heritage, as 'that which gives the present a context in history'.[254] It also embodies Lowenthal's past-related benefits of 'reaffirmation and validation' and 'individual and group identity'.

Beattie was not a prolific historian, and after 1914 produced little new work, yet his museum collection provided evidence from which historians could work. Although not overtly interpreted by Beattie, the collection was nevertheless laid out in such a way as to encourage the observer to interpret. In that the likely interpretations would almost inevitably have included a questioning of authority, they would have been perceived by some to be subversive. Endorsed by commercial success, the Beattie collection seemed set to provoke such interpretations even after the collector's death.

Those who wished to neuter the penal past could not do so by simply avoiding the subject; its presence was too palpable. On the one hand, what such people required was a rewriting of that past; on the other, the elevation of an alternative past which diminished the penal past's significance. As the Depression began to lift, as a leader with vision emerged, and as once more the call to duty was heard, so Tasmanians gained in self-confidence. The time for reassessment of the past was ripe. Once this occurred, the new view of the past so formed was taken account of by the historical tourism industry. As previously, the past's treatment by that industry was dictated by its commercial potential, its marketability.

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253 CRITIC, 8 February, 1918.

254 HAY, P R, *op. cit.*

CHAPTER 5: WATERSHED, 1935 TO 1945

5.1 A PAST FOR THE PRESENT

5.1.1 No longer "Sleepy Hollow"

In 1929, Joe Lyons resigned from the Tasmanian Parliamentary Labor Party in order to enter federal politics, and Albert Ogilvie, who had been Attorney-General in the Lyons Ministry, was elected as Leader of the Opposition. In the 1931 poll, in spite of a lacklustre term, the Liberal government was returned. This was partly because the state Labor Party was associated in the electors' minds with the failure of the federal Labor government to deal adequately with the Depression.[1] The Tasmanian Liberals, however, dealt with it no better.

Nevertheless, Labor, the victim of unfavourable press coverage and internal divisions of its own, was not expected to win the 1934 poll. That it did, by the narrowest of margins and yet again thanks to the support of an independent member, seems to have come as a surprise even to Ogilvie himself. However, unlike his predecessors, Earle and Lyons, he did not let his slim hold on power constrain him. From the start, he pursued a policy of radical reform the like of which Tasmania had never witnessed. As Richard Davis remarked in *Eighty Years Labor*:

> he ... emerged as one of the most dynamic and exciting premiers the state had ever known.... With Ogilvie in the saddle, Tasmania ceased to be a sleepy hollow and appeared a hive of activity and not a little experimentation.[2]

The Ogilvie government benefited from the country's gradual emergence from the darkest days of the Depression, but its reflationary economic policy did much to create jobs and build business confidence. In addition to initiating many schemes for relief work, it gave a considerable boost to the state's hydro-electric development. Ogilvie also furthered negotiations with the large paper-manufacturing companies which set up in Tasmania to take advantage of the cheap power. Thanks in part to this policy, he was able to claim that he had won a victory over the Depression. The voters of Tasmania appeared to endorse this claim for, at the 1937 poll, they returned his government with 59 per cent of the vote. For

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1 Ogilvie did nothing to dispel this association when he invited the federal Treasurer, E G Theodore, to 'star' in his election campaign. This view is suggested by Davis (*op. cit.*, 27).

2 *Ibid.*, 32.

the first time, the Labor Party had achieved a majority in a Tasmanian state election.[3]

Two years later, in June 1939, Ogilvie died of a heart attack. He was forty-seven. In an assessment of his five years as Premier, Michael Roe has argued that in his person and style Ogilvie embodied both the 'Vandiemonian' and 'Tasmanian' aspects of his state.[4] The former may be discerned in his ancestry. He was the grandson of two convicts and son of a publican. More importantly, his style was firmly in the "larrikin" tradition; his initial rise to the ministry was attributed by the *Mercury* to 'the politics of push', and his performance as Premier was characterised by opportunism and craft. Yet, in the 'Tasmanian' tradition of the anti-transportationists and the liberals who achieved power in the 1880s, he was a great reformer with abiding concerns for the common people and a belief in social justice. In his eulogy of Ogilvie, Morris Miller claimed that he had 'demolished the signs of ancient days and aroused a modern outlook'. Roe takes this to mean 'beyond reasonable doubt ... that Ogilvie banished shadows of the convict past'.

Upon Ogilvie's death, his Treasurer, the 69 year-old Edmund Dwyer-Gray, was elected as Premier for a limited term of six months, upon which he stepped aside for Robert Cosgrove. Since one of Ogilvie's reforms was the extension of parliamentary terms to five years, no election was due until 1942. Cosgrove, however, decided to go to the polls in December 1941. Thanks largely to the popularity won for the party by Ogilvie, Labor achieved an unprecedented 62 per cent of the vote and twenty of the thirty possible lower house seats. According to Richard Davis:

> The Nationalists were beginning to realise that Labor had established itself as the normal government of the state and that something more than the efflux of time would be necessary before they could regain the treasury benches.[5]

In fact, despite lacking the innovation, flare and daring of Ogilvie, Cosgrove remained as Premier for nineteen years, and Labor retained its hold upon government until 1969.

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3 DAVIS, *op. cit.*, 35.

4 ROE, M, 1986; A G Ogilvie and the Blend of Van Diemen's Land with Tasmania, *Bulletin of the Centre for Tasmanian Historical Studies*, 39-59.

5 DAVIS, *op. cit.*, 39.

5.1.2 A boost for tourism

Ogilvie's reforms and initiatives ranged over many areas, with the development of the tourist industry maintaining a high position on his agenda. The road to the pinnacle of Mount Wellington is today the most visible memorial to this commitment, but many social reforms were implemented with the intention of making the island more attractive to tourists, which it has been suggested Ogilvie desired 'as a boost both to the economy and to popular morale'.[6]

In November 1934, the *Tourist Bureau Act 1917* was repealed and replaced with a new Act which created a Government Tourist Bureau as an independent entity responsible to the Minister for Transport.[7] The brief given to the director was as wide as that which had previously been given to the Commissioner for Railways, and Emmett was installed in the new job. Expenditure was immediately doubled to just over £20,000 and gross receipts rose to £87,064, a record.[8]

After 1934, tourism by road as opposed to rail was further boosted by two additional factors. The first of these was the provision for private motor cars and motorcycles to be shipped to Tasmania, introduced the previous year. The second was the creation of many more roads by the Ogilvie government, partly as an employment generating policy, partly to promote tourism.[9] All these roads were in or led to scenic areas, and were energetically publicised.[10]

In the year he came to power, Ogilvie estimated that the cost-benefit of tourism to Tasmania was £750,000.[11] Over the next five years, as incoming traffic increased at an average annual rate of 8.8 per cent, the industry was reckoned to be worth £1 million each year.[12] This increase was in many ways a response to the Bureau's

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6 ROE, 1986, *op. cit.* Among Ogilvie's tourism incentives were bills which were passed to extend hotel trading hours and to limit Saturday trading for shops. It is also worth noting that although Ogilvie remained as Premier-without-portfolio during his first term, in 1938, when he assumed a ministry, Tourism was his choice.

7 *The Tourist Bureau Act 1934* (25 Georgii V No 31).

8 JPP 1935/22.

9 'One of the main objectives of the government's tourist policy 1934-39 was to create employment.' (MOSLEY, *op. cit.*, 53.)

10 Among the roads being constructed or improved upon at the start of 1935 were those from Waratah to Pieman River, Wilmot to Cradle Mountain, Derwent Bridge to Lake St Clair, Queenstown to Strahan, the Springs to Pinnacle (Mt Wellington) and the East Coast Road to Cole's Bay (MERCURY, 1 January 1935).

11 MERCURY, 26 July 1934.

12 MOSLEY, *op. cit.*, 54.

increased investment in publicity. New offices were opened in Queenstown, Ballarat, Newcastle and Perth. Lectures were given, films shown and hundreds of thousands of brochures distributed. To assist those on limited budgets, inclusive prepaid tours were promoted,[13] and many new attractions such as illuminated caves, lakeside boarding houses, ski fields and walking tracks were developed.[14] In the 1938-39 season, 57,249 passengers arrived in Tasmania by ship and a further 6,190 by airliner. The income of the Tourist Bureau for the year was £215,692.

After September 1939, when war was declared, shipping to Tasmania was restricted, some of the mainland bureaux were temporarily closed and no new tourism initiatives were taken by the Cosgrove government. Understandably, tourist numbers dropped as they did throughout the world. When the war began to draw to a close, however, the Cosgrove government anticipated that tourism would be an important factor in the post-war economy. In preparation for the expected boom, a considerable commitment of funds was made. This took account of the increased importance which had attached to historical tourism, and in particular to the Port Arthur site.

5.1.3 A new view of the past

Despite Michael Roe's understanding that Ogilvie's premiership had 'banished shadows of the convict past', throughout the 1930s many Tasmanians still felt difficulty about coming to terms with it. Emmett, who remained as Director of the Tourist Department until 1940, was among them. Nevertheless, Tasmanian history featured among his many interests, and he well understood its value to the tourist trade. In 1936, in a lecture he gave to the Launceston Rotary Club, he said that Tasmania's 'rich historical associations ... had a distinct commercial value as well as sentimental worth'.[15]

The thrust of Emmett's speech was in fact a plea for the preservation of the graves of 'Tasmanian pioneers, and of the men and women who had done something for their State'. Supporting his call, the *Mercury* exhorted its readers to 'be worthy of

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13 These "colour-line" tours were initiated before 1934, but gained in popularity as the tourist traffic increased. In the summer of 1934-35, tours lasting from 6 to 16 days cost between £12 and £31 (MERCURY, 1 January 1935). It has been estimated that in 1934, 5 per cent of all tourists were colour-line tourists (MOSLEY, *op. cit.*, 41).

14 While these are not germane to this study, they are described in some detail in MOSLEY, *op. cit.*, 42-47.

15 MERCURY, 29 May 1936.

[their] heritage, and pass it on, enriched, to coming generations'. This version of Tasmania's 'heritage' may be seen as an attempt to instil pride in the past into Tasmanians, who increasingly were able to take a pride in their present. It was promoted in varying ways during the late 1930s by several individuals and groups, and in an unofficial way became the policy of the Department of Tourism. Of necessity, the pursuance of this policy required that the evils of the penal era should be played down.

Emmett himself applied this policy in his own *Short History of Tasmania* (1937),[16] which he wrote in response to 'repeated requests from visitors for a cheap history of Tasmania'.[17] In it, he barely mentioned the state's convict past, surprisingly even avoiding the temptation to highlight the significance of such tourist attractions as Port Arthur. The pioneer past and Emmett's recreational predilections were simultaneously catered for in a long section on the island's explorers.[18] The book also included a chapter on Tasmania's proud role in the founding of Victoria, occasioned by that state's centenary celebrations, which occurred over the summer of 1934-35.[19]

But it is two other books published by the Tourist Bureau in 1937 which illustrate most clearly the twin arms of the Department's policy. The first is J Moore-Robinson's post-humously published *Historical Brevities of Tasmania*, an eccentrically organised collection of historical snippets. Moore-Robinson, whose specialism had become debunking,[20] was particularly keen to take the edge off the widely

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16 EMMETT, E T, 1937; *A Short History of Tasmania*; Angus & Robertson, Sydney.

17 MERCURY, 15 June 1935.

18 Emmett, an inveterate bushwalker, was the founder and president of Hobart Walking Club.

19 In 1934, the Tourist Bureau opportunistically produced *Tasmania (Australia)*, the historical section of which dealt only with Tasmania's role in the founding of Victoria. The book was written: 'to show that the two States have an inseparable interest in the Centenary celebrations of 1934-35 [when] doubtless a very large proportion of the visitors to Melbourne will be desirous of taking the few hours' trip across Bass Strait to obtain some first-hand knowledge of the beautiful island that is really the 'mother of Victoria' (TASMANIAN GOVERNMENT TOURIST BUREAU, 1934, *op. cit.*, 4).

20 In 1935, Moore-Robinson explained his position on this: 'I wish to stress that the quest after truth is not in essence an iconoclastic adventure, although it may involve the destruction of idols with clay feet.... It was old Horace, I fancy, who originated the tag about truth being "mighty and must prevail", and I strongly urge that the truth about our old Tasmanian institutions, customs and inhabitants will enhance rather than diminish their charm and attractiveness.' (MERCURY, 14 January 1935; letter to the editor.)

circulated horror stories about the island's past. In his section on "Executions", he stated his point of view:

> Much injustice has been done to Tasmania by extravagant stories of the extreme severity of punishment in the penal days. This injustice is due to unwarranted credence being given to picturesque writers of fiction, whose spurious tales have been accepted as sterling currency.[21]

To add substance to his point, he claimed that the number of prisoners actually executed in Tasmania was small. He quoted Montague's statistical returns for the years 1824 to 1839 to show that only 302 people were executed during that fifteen year period, the maximum number in any one year being 53 in 1826, when the population of the colony was in the region of 14,000. However, had Moore-Robinson selected his years slightly differently, he could have produced figures showing that in the four and a half years between May 1823 and December 1827, there had occurred 182 executions, that 27 men were condemned to death at one session in 1826, and that ten were publicly executed *en masse* the following year. It was a rate of execution which Lloyd Robson found 'impressive'.[22]

Of Port Arthur, Moore-Robinson wrote: 'Much of an untrue nature has been written and spoken about the famous settlement, a perusal of official records effectively robbing romantic story-tellers of legitimate basis for picturesque legends'.[23] He contended that the discipline was 'no more stern than in British prisons of the period', but did not go into details. Neither did he have anything to say about the regime at Macquarie Harbour. But it was the horrors of the Black War which he took the greatest pains to play down.

He stated that the 'fate [of the Aborigines] was written when white men arrived'. Their numbers he put at no more than 600 or 700.[24] No explanation was given for what he described as the 'constant feuds between the white settlers and the aborigines, resulting in appalling loss of life and damage to property' between 1803 and 1830, although 'runaway prisoners and bushrangers' were blamed to some extent for 'instruct[ing] the natives in habits and methods of the white people'. Governor Arthur was praised for his 'intense humanitarianism' in issuing

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21 MOORE-ROBINSON, *op. cit.*, 58.

22 ROBSON, 1983, *op. cit.*, 147.

23 MOORE-ROBINSON, *op. cit.*, 39.

24 *Ibid.*, 61. On the basis of Moore-Robinson's estimate, we would have to assume that half the island's entire Aboriginal population were hunting at Risdon on 3 May 1804, the day of the massacre. The absurdity of this notion does not appear to have occurred to Moore-Robinson.

proclamations 'enjoining on white people the necessity of abstaining from acts of hostility to the natives'. That no attempts were made to enforce such injunctions Moore-Robinson did not state. Nor did his point of view allow him any compassion for the remnants of a defeated race: the final forty-four Aborigines who were moved to Oyster Cove, he wrote, deteriorated rapidly, 'being debased by vice and drink'.[25]

Thus, by the selective use of facts, by continual protestations of his objectivity and meticulous research methods, and by sly insertion of unsupported opinion did Moore-Robinson seek to persuade his readers that his version of the past was the revelation of truth, whereas before all had been myth. Critchley Parker, the author of the Bureau's other 1937 publication, *Tasmania, Jewel of the Commonwealth,* on the other hand, was more concerned with the creation of myths.

Parker, a well-to-do young Victorian and Tasmanophile,[26] described his work as:

> [a]n illustrated account of the Island of Tasmania, its Natural Resources and Advantages, its Activities and Enterprises, and the opportunities it affords, thanks to the wonderful Hydro-Electric System, for the Establishment of Secondary Industries.[27]

Aimed as much at the intending settler or potential investor as at the tourist, Parker's book sports a map of the HEC's power distribution grid on its cover, and much of it is devoted to demonstrating the island's vigorous emergence from the gloom of the Depression. Thus eight pages are given to a description of the Hydro-Electric Commission, twenty-nine to the mining industry and thirty-four to other primary industries.

In keeping with this view of Tasmania's present, it was necessary to present a picture of the past no less lacking in vitality. Thus, in the 'historical' section at the start of the book, Parker set out to show that 'Tasmania may rightly claim in many ways to have been the foundation centre of Australian culture, education and sport'.[28] To do so, he studiously avoided any mention of Aborigines or convicts, and placed great emphasis upon the first religious services, the construction of early churches, the building of the Lady Franklin Museum and the state's sporting and cultural achievements. He concluded by saying, 'What a remarkable history, and one of which the people of the State may justly be proud!'.[29]

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25 MOORE-ROBINSON, *op. cit.*, 62-63.

26 GOWLAND, R & K, 1973; *Trampled Wilderness: the History of South-West Tasmania;* Devonport, Tasmania, 193.

27 PARKER, *op. cit.*, V.

28 *Ibid.*, 1.

29 *Ibid.*, 6.

Yet in a book written mainly for tourists, it was impossible to ignore entirely the relics of the convict period. So, in a brief section entitled 'A Closed Chapter', Parker justified their retention because:

> [w]hatever may be said against preservation of such reminders of old, unhappy, far-off things, their attraction for tourists cannot be gainsaid. Moreover, the world displays similar relics of early days and preserves them, too. Why? Because they are stepping stones upon which mankind mounts to higher things.[30]

But today's Tasmanians, Parker believed, had also mounted on stepping stones of considerably greater worth. He identified them in the section of his book which he called 'The Peerless Pioneers'. It merits quoting in full:

> The first men and women who bravely and yet altogether unconsciously participated in the making of Tasmania were those hardy, peerless pioneers who, leaving their fine and often cultured English homes, valiantly faced the discomforts and dangers of long voyages, in small sailing ships, of five months' duration in order to give their offspring wider scope and a better chance to become useful citizens. Like the Pilgrim Fathers, with unconquerable souls and hopeful hearts, they came in their different *Mayflowers* to this Land of Promise and founded an important outpost in a far-flung portion of the British Empire. But what privations were before them! Aye! though, what would Tasmania have been if such noble pioneers as these had not worthily done their part in bringing refinement, culture and compassion to a country then peopled by officials and many poor unfortunates, and in conquering the virgin forests that would have caused but the strongest hearts to quail before such tasks. They had to be as strong as a gum tree in their resolution to succeed. In the hawthorn, poplar, oak, and other deciduous trees, intermingling with the indigenous evergreens, one discerns a little bit of Old England in an indissoluble union, brought about by equal sacrifice and a happy blending of love and duty. Thus has Tasmania come into her own, befitting a queen properly understood and appreciated.[31]

There were, of course, other pioneers than those from 'fine and often cultured English homes'. There were the battlers who, in the later nineteenth century, opened up areas such as the northwest, with little help from convict labour. These too had their mythologisers.[32] Indeed, during the late 1930s, there was a strong popular

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30 PARKER, *op. cit.*, 38.

31 *Ibid.*, 42.

32 In December 1920, there was a meeting of 30-40 Table Cape pioneers who reminisced about old times (ADVOCATE, 28 December 1928). Celebrations of the centenaries of townships (of which there were many during the 1920s and '30s) invariably involved invocations of the "pioneer past". Lengthy newspaper articles on Ringarooma (EXAMINER, 17 October 1936) and Devonport (EXAMINER, 7 November 1936) laid great stress on the pioneering history of the two northern towns.

movement devoted to the commemoration of all aspects of the state's pioneering past. This movement was co-ordinated in the main by two non-government organisations, Launceston's 50,000 League and the Tasmanian Society, based in Hobart. These organisations also bore the major share of the costs involved in their commemorative work. The state, on the other hand, was driven by economic rather than ideological imperatives. Although it paid lip-service to the celebration of the pioneer past, the sums of money it provided for the purpose were small. Its major investments were in those relics of the past in which tourists were primarily interested. As before, these were the relics of the convict past.

5.2 'THE PEERLESS PIONEERS'

5.2.1 The 50,000 League

The 50,000 League was founded in Launceston in 1926. League members aimed 'to promote the progress and prosperity of Launceston in particular, and Tasmania generally, by doing everything in their power to create and encourage financially and/or otherwise' a variety of measures including development of the tourist traffic and an increase in the population of their city.[33] The name of the League was derived from the size of population which its members believed appropriate for Launceston. They also wished for the creation of similarly named leagues throughout the Commonwealth with the combined aim of hastening the attainment of an Australian population of 20 million.[34] In 1930, it began a project of marking Launceston's 'historic sites ... so that by such means citizens will gain a greater knowledge of [their city's] early history'. It was also felt that this would be 'of great interest to tourists and visitors'.[35]

By far the League's most ambitious project was the Pioneer Celebration and tree planting of 1935. The proposal that an avenue of trees should be planted between Hobart and Launceston as a memorial to the pioneers of Tasmania was conceived

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33 50,000 LEAGUE, Annual Report 1946/47, Launceston City Library, Local History Collection.

34 The population of the country recorded by the 1921 census was 5,436,794, of Hobart 43,615 and of Launceston 24,318. Among the 50,000 League's projects was a publication in the late 1920s which, in a clear challenge to the south, sported on each alternate page a map of Tasmania showing the name of the northern city in considerably larger print than that of the official capital (50,000 LEAGUE, undated, *op. cit.*).

35 50,000 LEAGUE, Annual Report 1931, Tasmaniana Library, Hobart.

by the League in 1927. Such an avenue, it was felt, would 'greatly [add] to the attractions of the state from a tourist's point of view'.[36]

With the support of the Ogilvie government and of both Launceston and Hobart City Councils, the plan was initiated at a grand Pioneer Carnival held on 6 and 7 April 1935. On the first day, the Governor, Sir Ernest Clark, and Lady Clark received over one thousand descendants of 'pioneers' who had arrived in Tasmania during or before 1835. A list of those presented was subsequently handed to the Queen Victoria Museum and published in the Weekly Courier.[37] For the carnival which followed the presentation, the City Park was converted into 'Old Launceston'. Replicas of old buildings, "Ye Old Toffee Shop", "Ye Olde Tuck Shoppe" and "Ye Olde Pig and Whistle", adorned the ground; a Town Crier plied his trade; 'Scotch lassies' danced to music by the pipes. That evening, a ball was held, attended by thousands, many in period costume. The following day, a Sunday, was devoted to services of thanksgiving conducted by the clergy of 'pioneer churches'.[38]

In declaring the celebrations open, the Mayor of Launceston, Mr von Bibra, gave an account of the history of Tasmania. Mention in passing was made of the fact that many respectable families were encouraged to emigrate by grants of land and the free use of convict labour; 'considerable trouble with the blacks' was cited as an obstacle overcome; and from 1830 onwards, it was stated, 'the island made solid progress'. Then the Mayor put the celebrations in their context:

> One of the objects of these celebrations is to bring home to the present generation a full appreciation of the achievements of the pioneers. A realisation of their achievements would help us all in our duty of putting our country first. Those splendid men and women have provided us with tradition, which is such a big factor in the development and advancement of any country.... Tradition and patriotism were big factors in the success of the AIF in the Great War.

He then handed over to J J Wignall, Mayor of Hobart, who planted the first tree of the pioneer avenue, an American cypress, 'almost in the shadow of the Cenotaph'.

There is no record that anyone of convict ancestry sought presentation to the Governor or that anyone donned convict garb in order to add a touch of authenticity to the 'miniature town of 100 years ago', as the *Mercury* described the

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36 'It [was] not proposed that the avenue should be continuous, but that avenues of varying lengths at intervals of a few miles should be planted.' (EXAMINER, 2 April 1935.)

37 WEEKLY COURIER, 11 April 1935.

38 EXAMINER, 6 April 1935.

converted City Park. Admission of Tasmania's convict past could breed resentment, disloyalty and defeatism. For the state and city to progress, opposite sentiments were called for. Moreover, on the international front, the perceived twin threats of Bolshevism in Russia and Fascism in Germany made another call of duty in the near future all too likely. Loyal citizens, proud of their past, would clearly have cause to defend an empire in which they could be sure they played a significant part. As von Bibra informed the Governor in his address:

> the descendants of pioneer families of Tasmania ... desire to convey to Your Excellency our assurance of our loyalty and devotion to the Throne and person of His Majesty King George V.[39]

In harking back to its chosen version of the past, the 50,000 League was playing a clear role in the politics of the present. As a mark of approval for its efforts, the League's membership in 1935 increased from 500 to 700.[40] Its base, however, was Launceston. What was required to follow up the work of the Pioneer Celebration was a statewide organisation. It was not long before one was founded.

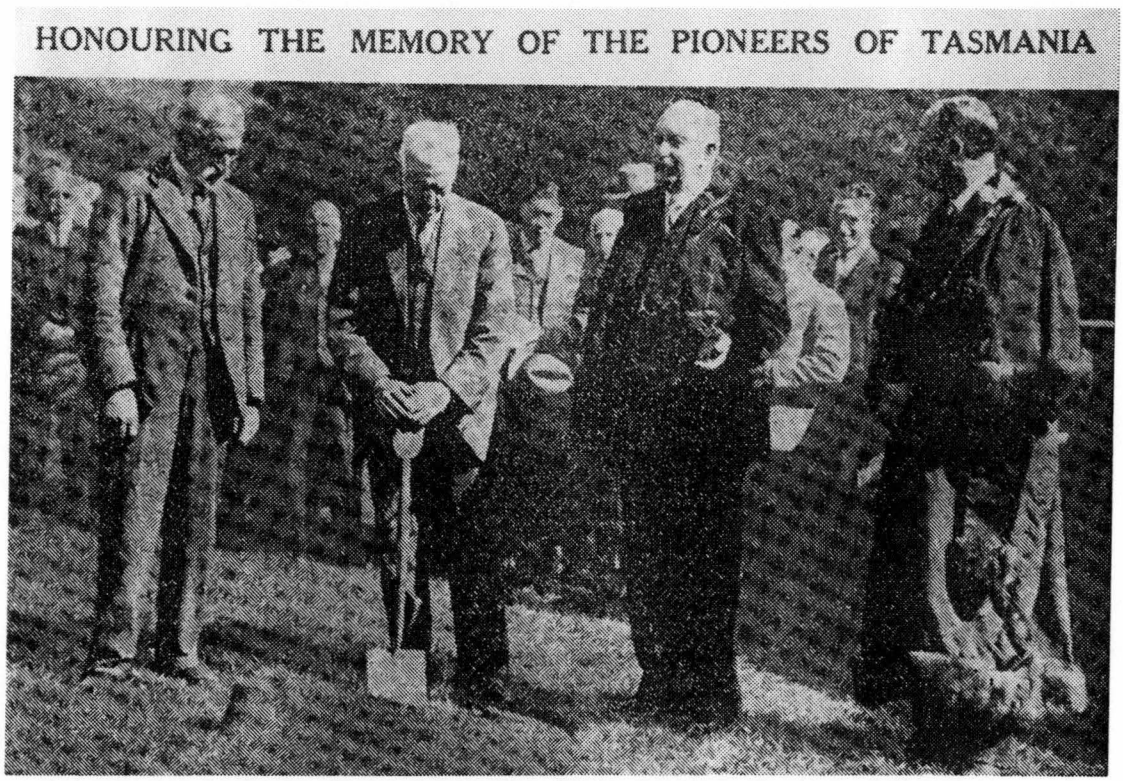

FIGURE 5.1

AT THE "PIONEER CARNIVAL"

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39 MERCURY, 8 April 1935.

40 MERCURY, 28 May 1936.

5.2.2 The Tasmanian Society

Following hard on the heels of the Pioneer Carnival, The Tasmanian Society was set up 'for the purpose of creating interest in the wonderful historical monuments and relics which abound in this island state, its scenic beauties, its historical traditions, and many other features for which the state is noted'.[41] It was founded at a public meeting held in Hobart on 3 December 1935. Its founder was J J Wignall, Mayor of Hobart, who had planted the first tree of the pioneer avenue. The co-convener of the meeting was Alan Wardlaw MLC from Launceston, who was on the executive of the 50,000 League's "Pioneer Gathering Committee". At the meeting, a constitution was adopted, an annual membership fee of 2/6d approved, and southern representatives of a State Executive Committee elected.

The following week saw a meeting in Launceston at which the northern representatives of the State Executive were elected. Wignall became State President. At further meetings in the north and south, Wardlaw was elected chairman of the northern division, Wignall chairman of the southern, and a young aspiring historian, Basil Rait, was appointed State Secretary. The objects of the society included:

1) the erection of historical monuments and marking of historical sites 'in a manner similar to that of the great national societies of Britain';
2) the preservation of historical buildings, relics and other such landmarks;
3) the creation of pioneer avenues;
4) the celebration of historical anniversaries;
5) the provision of a journal for publishing historical records;
6) the presentation of lectures.[42]

In a speech written for delivery to the meeting of September 1936 which was intended to commence the 'state campaign' of the Tasmanian Society, Rait expressed the philosophical stance of the organisation:

> Through neglect Tasmania has become known as the Convict Island – this is a hideous stain upon the pages of our history – a name which Tasmania does not deserve. We, who are descendants of the pioneers, would be lacking in our duty to the memory of our ancestors – those gallant souls who braved the perils of an unknown land to win that glorious heritage which is ours, if we failed to remove this stain.[43]

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41 NS 314/4, *Tasmanian Society Correspondence*, typescript mission statement, undated, presumed written by Basil Rait.

42 *Ibid.*

43 *Ibid.*, draft speech, unsigned, undated. The typeface suggests that this speech was written by Rait. Proximity to other documents in the file and evidence from the report in the *Mercury* (14 September 1936) suggest

The society rapidly grew in prestige. The Governor, Sir Ernest Clark, agreed to become its patron; the Mayor of Launceston was elected State Vice-President; and the Bishop of Tasmania, Vice Chairman of the southern division. The southern committee elected in December 1937 boasted, in addition to those already named, two aldermen, four doctors (including the noted antiquarian, William Crowther), two majors and a number of pillars of the Hobart establishment including E T Emmett. The latter, who had been a member of the state executive since the previous year, informed a meeting of the society in September 1936 that it could look confidently for sympathetic support from the government.[44] The following March, a tokenistic state subsidy of £75 was awarded.[45]

During its first four years of life, the Tasmanian Society proved effective at fulfilling its first objective, the commemoration of historical sites, but far less effective at preserving those of them threatened with destruction. 'Commemorations', wrote Tom Griffiths in his essay "Past Silences: Aborigines and Convicts in Our History Making", 'are public. They are statements to posterity. They mark out the line that we continually draw between private experience and public knowledge.'[46] The sites selected for commemoration by the Tasmanian Society represented those aspects of the state's past which the society wished to make public.

In the first year of its existence, it was responsible for the erection of ten plaques to mark sites historically significant to the state, the church, the armed forces and organised capital. These were the sites of: the first Christian service to be held in Tasmania; old Government House; the original Hutchins School; Mulgrave Battery; the old signal house at Prince's Park; the first bridge at Huonville; the Town Hall, Hobart; the AMP insurance society building, Hobart; and the Union Bank, Launceston (the bank's first Australian branch). A plaque was also erected in Cygnet, south of Hobart, in memory of the first rector of that parish.[47] This somewhat eccentric collection was assembled by Rait, partly, it may be assumed, because the organisations expecting to benefit from the publicity surrounding the commemoration ceremonies were themselves prepared to pay the £4 or £5 which the plaques cost. Organisations prepared to contribute in this way would have been selected over those which were not.[48]

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the occasion. It cannot be stated with certainty, however, whether this draft speech was actually delivered or by whom.

44 MERCURY, 14 September 1936.

45 NS 314/4: Under Secretary to Rait, 24 March 1937.

46 GRIFFITHS, *op. cit.* (See page 160 n35).

47 NS 314/4, Annual Report of the Tasmanian Society, 1937.

48 NS 314/3, correspondence between Rait and various Town Clerks and representatives of the organisations in question.

In addition to the marking of sites, three church services were held in the society's first year to commemorate anniversaries of such events as the arrival in 1837 of the Franklins; five broadcasts were made over national radio, and a memorial avenue was laid out in Swansea on the east coast.[49]

Two monuments were also erected, both commemorating visits of early navigators. The first was the D'Entrecasteaux Monument, erected in the locality of Gordon, south of Hobart, in 1938. This marked the visit of the French Rear Admiral, Bruni D'Entrecasteaux, to Tasmanian waters in April and May 1792. The second was a cement block, erected in Dunalley on 3 December 1942, to commemorate Tasman's landing in the nearby Blackman's Bay exactly three hundred years earlier. It was unveiled before a small audience of dignitaries by the Ambassador for the Netherlands. The Tasmanian Society had hoped that the event would be marked by celebrations 'on an elaborate scale worthy of the occasion',[50] but the war prevented this. Instead, the ceremony was used to stress the solidarity of Britain and Holland in the face of Nazi tyranny.[51]

By the above means, the Tasmanian Society satisfied all its objectives but the second, the preservation of historic buildings. It made two attempts to save particular buildings, but they were unsuccessful. The first was in connection with the Shot Tower at Taroona. In 1936, it was learned that the tower's owner intended to demolish the building in order to make use of the stone. The Tasmanian Society responded by initiating a public appeal for £400 with which to purchase and restore the site. At a meeting to initiate the appeal, Mayor Wignall opened the fund with a donation of £5.[52] But, despite considerable publicity, the Tasmanian government declined to contribute as did the Hobart Chamber of Commerce.[53] The appeal faltered, but the owner of the tower decided against demolition and in 1945 it was still on the market at a much reduced price.[54]

A second attempt by the Tasmanian Society to halt the demolition of a historically significant building casts a revealing light on the society's limitations. In October 1936, Smales, the secretary of the northern division of the society, wrote to Rait informing him that he had heard that the Oatlands gaol was being 'pulled to pieces

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49 *Ibid.*, Annual Report of the Tasmanian Society, 1937 and MERCURY, 27 March 1943.

50 EXAMINER, 14 September 1936, p9.

51 MERCURY, 4 December 1942.

52 MERCURY, 11 June 1936.

53 NS 314/4: Chamber of Commerce to Rait, 17 June 1936.

54 AA264, *Minutes of the Scenery Preservation Board*, 9 October 1945.

by anyone who want[ed] the materials'.[55] The Oatlands gaol was built in 1834 and covered about an acre of land.[56] Once the third largest town in Tasmania, Oatlands had shrunk since being bypassed by the mainline railway in 1876, so that by 1926 it could be said that the gaol was 'large enough to accommodate all Oatlands'.[57] The gaol was still in use in 1934, when two police cells were built for prisoners awaiting trial. Thereafter, the large building was clearly redundant, although it did 'attract a number of visitors'.[58]

Shortly after Smales had written to Rait, an Oatlands citizen, F Heywood, wrote to Wardlaw urging him, through the Tasmanian Society, to prevent the demolition. The gaol was 'one of the outstanding features of Oatlands and a very considerable tourist attraction', he stated, adding that Mr Goss of the Tourist Bureau entirely agreed.[59] Wardlaw swiftly wrote to Rait asking if he could approach Colonel Lord, the Commissioner of Police, to see whether he could prevent the sale of the building, or, failing that, request that it be left standing if the society could raise sufficient money to purchase it itself. Then he added pointedly that he hoped:

> nobody [would] rush into print regarding this matter. Both the Police and the Government have been wonderfully helpful to us and I, personally, would not be party to worrying them in any way.[60]

Smales wrote to Rait in similar vein a few days later: the co-operation provided by police and government at commemoration ceremonies was clearly not to be jeopardised. Rait obligingly ruffled no feathers and the building was lost.[61]

It might also be conjectured that the preservation of a convict gaol was not a likely cause to send the society's state secretary 'rushing into print'. In fact, there is no record of the Tasmanian Society having been responsible for the preservation of a single threatened building throughout its history. Its essential, ideologically-driven purpose was to push the view of Tasmania's past most acceptable to the state's civic and business leaders. The expectation that the entire community would support this interpretation indefinitely, however, was unrealisable. Too many Tasmanians had convict ancestry, and could not feel entirely comfortable with the

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55 NS 314/4: Smales to Rait, 12 October 1937.

56 MERCURY, 23 March 1934.

57 LORD and REID, *op. cit.*, 119.

58 MERCURY, 23 March 1934.

59 NS 314/4: Heywood to Wardlaw, 15 October 1936.

60 NS 314/4: Wardlaw to Rait, 19 October 1937.

61 In fact, the archway to the front door was preserved and still stands in Oatlands as entrance to the grounds of the state school.

fiction of the "pioneer past". For them, there would always be a convict past, even if they managed for a while to cloak it. The tourist industry, also, ensured its persistence. To provide all Tasmanians (except of course the unacknowledged Aboriginal Tasmanians) with a past which would fully enfranchise them in the present, a revision of the convict past was necessary. This subject had been broached by Clive Lord and John Moore-Robinson in the 1920s. It was definitively expounded in 1941. Predictably, the impetus came from Port Arthur.

5.3 THEM AND US

5.3.1 Port Arthur: whose heritage?

As the Depression lifted, the number of tourists to visit Port Arthur each year increased dramatically. From a low of 5,441 in 1934/35, the figure rose to 6,452 the following year, and to 10,309 the year after that.[62] The value of the site to the tourist industry was by now so clear that even the *Mercury* was arguing strenuously for its preservation.[63] Although the *Illustrated Tasmanian Mail* could still predict in 1935 that a state referendum on the retention of the buildings would vote to demolish them, no pragmatic person concerned for the island's economy would support this view. The ruins were an economic resource, and managed as such. The intention was to extract from them the largest possible return from the smallest possible outlay. This meant disregarding their potential as an educational resource and their role as part of Tasmania's heritage. Even the Tasman Council, it would appear, put so little store by their cultural significance that in 1938 not one of the 37 children at Port Arthur State School 'had been around the ruins or knew anything about them' despite the fact that the guides brought all visitors through the school yard on their tours of inspection.[64]

Officially, interpretation of the site was in the hands of the guides. They were instructed to tailor their work particularly to suit the convenience of the increasing number of day trippers. Prior to the 1938/39 season, the commencement of guided

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62 AA264, *Minutes of the Scenery Preservation Board*, Annual Report 1935; AB541/3, *Correspondence of the Tasman Municipal Council: Tourism*: Council Clerk to Chair, SPB, 14 May 1937, and AB541/1, *Correspondence of the Tasman Municipal Council: Audit*: Audit Department to Warden, 18 June 1936.

63 See, for instance, MERCURY, 15 June 1935; *Editorial* and MERCURY, 26 July 1937; *Editorial*.

64 The school's new teacher found this situation 'deeply deplorable' and shamed the Tasman Council into granting a free trip round the ruins for her class (NOYE, *op. cit.*).

tours was fixed to coincide with the arrival of travellers who had crossed the Derwent on the 8.20am ferry. When it was discovered that this starting time necessitated an early breakfast for those staying in Hobart hotels, 'many of whom would not go on that account', the starting time of tours was put back to synchronise with the 9.15am ferry. Visitors also had to leave Port Arthur at 3pm in order to catch the 5.50pm ferry back across the river. In order to cope with this tight schedule, guides were asked to conduct inspections 'more expeditiously'. It was believed that 'a full description of the places inspected could be given in a little over half an hour if the guides do not waste time'.[65]

Not only were guided tours short, they were also, it appears, of less than optimum quality. Alf Maule endured several complaints against him for 'insobriety',[66] and Joe O'Neill, appointed in 1936, was in the habit of 'spitting phlegm very frequently' and because of an old injury had to leave the tour repeatedly in order to relieve himself, which was considered 'undesirable in mixed company'.[67]

Understandably, the guides acquired personal reputations, and tourists would commonly request their drivers to seek the services of a particular man. Under the prevailing system this was not possible. The guides worked turn-about at the gates according to a strict time-table. This also meant that if a large party arrived at a certain time, all would be taken around in one group. Even after the appointment of O'Neill, on a busy day as many as 60 would accompany a single guide.[68]

The guides' tales were described in 1939 in the Legislative Council as 'bloodthirsty and bloodcurdling',[69] and the level of seriousness may perhaps be ascertained by 'a tasteless joke' perpetrated in 1935 by 'some of the boys'. It was described by a witness:

> Imagine my horror when, chancing to glance across at the clock, I saw dangling from the tower what appeared to be a human form. Clothed in coat and trousers, the ghastly spectacle bore so much

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65 AA610, *General Correspondence Port Arthur Scenic Reserve 1938-1966*: Manager, Port Arthur to Secretary SPB, 1 August 1938.

66 For example AA264, *Minutes of the Scenery Preservation Board*, 26 June 1931.

67 AB541/3, *Correspondence of the Tasman Municipal Council: Tourism*: Emmett to Council Clerk, 30 April 1937 and Secretary of Local Committee to Emmett, undated.

68 *Ibid.*: Hildyard to Tasman Council, 12 March 1937. The system of arbitrarily allotting guides to tourists was criticised by Hildyard, a tourist bus driver, and had earlier come under fire from the Port Arthur Tourist and Progress Association (NS 1086/1, *Minutes of the PAT&PA*, 5 December 1929).

69 MERCURY, 8 December 1939.

> resemblance to a hanged man – the head had flopped onto the chest, and the arms hung lifelessly at each side – that I felt as if I would be immediately ill.[70]

In the guides' defence, it must be said that their incomes were pitifully small, and would have provided little incentive to them to take their work seriously. Even in the relatively good year 1935/36, Maule made only £133 and his fellow guide, Harry Frerk, £115.[71] Upon Maule's retirement in 1939, it was resolved to appoint a permanent guide on a salary of £4 per week throughout the year and a casual guide at the same rate for the duration of the tourist season,[72] but the outbreak of war prevented this. Instead, wages were set in 1940 at one third of the entry fee of 1/6d, and in 1940/41, when 2,893 tourists inspected the reserves, the payment for the guides' wages was a mere £74.[73]

Little attempt was made to control the patter of the guides until 1938, when Emmett and Radcliffe undertook to compile suitable information.[74] Radcliffe, in fact, appears to have produced the notes single-handedly, with reference to old records in his possession. They form a dispassionate and factually accurate account of the buildings and the various regimes under which the convicts were managed, and entirely eschew the sensational. They could, however, be described as "dry".[75] From 1939 onwards, they were intended to form the basis of the guides' descriptions. They were provided for new recruits, who were then required to 'make [themselves] competent to explain to visitors the history and details of the settlement and buildings'.[76]

The official Port Arthur guides had not only to cope with poor training, poor direction and poor, unpredictable incomes, they also had to compete with other

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70 SYDNEY MORNING HERALD, 22 June 1935; *Tasmanian Tour.*

71 AB541/3, *Correspondence of the Tasman Municipal Council: Tourism*: Council Clerk to Chair SPB, 14 May 1937.

72 AA597, *Minute Book of the Port Arthur and Eaglehawk Neck Reserves Board*, 23 August 1939.

73 *Ibid.*, Annual Report 1940-41.

74 *Ibid.*, 3 September 1938.

75 NS 946/7, *Notes for Port Arthur Guides*. Radcliffe also published *The Port Arthur Guide* (undated), which is essentially a guide to the buildings, and includes copies of several sentence records. The book was a response to the commonly heard appeal, 'A handbook detailing and describing all the buildings is badly needed' (PORTER, *op. cit.*, 143).

76 AA610, *General Correspondence Port Arthur Scenic Reserve 1938-1966*: job description, 1939, undated.

unofficial guides who showed parties of tourists around without authority. O'Neill, after he was sacked by Tasman Council, continued to 'subvert parties' in this way.[77]

It was the dissatisfaction of one of these unauthorised guides with the official guides' interpretations of Port Arthur which led to the construction of the revised version of the convict past which was given official sanction in 1941. The unofficial guide's name was Johnnis Danker. He had emigrated from Denmark to Tasmania in 1885 at the age of 27 and taken up residence at Port Arthur. There he worked as a builder alongside Harry Frerk, who later became a guide.

For the next thirty years, Danker periodically lived at Port Arthur, for a time splitting palings in the company, it was claimed, of former convicts.[78] In 1916, he obtained work as a guide, boatman and caretaker of Dead Island.[79] Two years later he was found unsatisfactory and sacked.[80] He acquired 44 acres of land at Point Puer, where he built himself a patchwork home from the ruins of the old boys' settlement. He was known variously as the "the Hermit of Point Puer" and "Jack the Guide" by the many tourists who visited him each summer. But the tales of convict life which he told them differed markedly from the tales told by the official guides. Danker claimed that the stories he had heard from his ex-convict work-mates totally conflicted with the generally accepted accounts of hardship and punishment, accounts which he believed had been grossly exaggerated.[81]

In 1938, at the age of 80, Danker applied to the Port Arthur Board for the position of guide.[82] He was unsuccessful. He was, however, determined to get his message across, and for many years he compiled information 'from every available source' with which he filled several notebooks in copper plate handwriting.[83] When his book was published, he hoped:

> that the real truth about the penal system [would] become known, and the lies that have painted it with horror and morbidity [would] be believed no more.[84]

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77 AB541/3, *Correspondence of the Tasman Municipal Council: Tourism*: Secretary of Local Committee to Emmett, undated.

78 MERCURY, 10 May 1938.

79 AA264, *Minutes of the Scenery Preservation Board*, 16 November 1916.

80 *Ibid.*, 8 August 1918.

81 MERCURY, 13 May 1939.

82 AB541/3, *Correspondence of the Tasman Municipal Council: Tourism*: Danker to Port Arthur Board, August 1938.

83 MERCURY, 10 May 1938. Although Danker's exercise books have not come to light, his applications for work are indeed written in exemplary copper plate.

84 *Ibid.*

For the last two years of his life, Danker collaborated on his book, finishing it just three weeks before he died in September 1939.[85] Although it was never published under his own name, it will be suggested that the contribution made by Danker's book towards the re-interpretation of Tasmania's convict past was considerable. Although not necessarily any closer to the truth than the previous interpretations, the new interpretation did much to make the convict past acceptable to Tasmanians.

5.3.2 *Shadow over Tasmania*

The humanistic attitude towards Port Arthur adopted by Roy Bridges has been described above. This attitude was shared by another visitor to the site, the naturalist, Charles Barrett, whose Tasmanian travel book, *Isle of Mountains*, was published in 1944. Barrett wrote:

> Whatever apologists may write, or say, the record of Port Arthur penal settlement is a black record; and of those responsible for it humanists can only think hardly.[86]

In fact, to the humanistic Barrett, no relic of the convict period could be experienced without his being made acutely aware of the brutalisation of convicts. Of Maria Island, for instance, he wrote:

> On the island are ruins of convict buildings; but people tell you to go there to see the cement works. Maria has been described as the Isle of Wight of the Antipodes. Ironical, if you recall the fact that convicts toiled and suffered on this Tasmanian island.... Do holiday makers ever think of these old unhappy far-off associations? ... Looking across to Maria Island, it appeared not as an Isle of Wight, but a grim reminder of man's inhumanity to man.[87]

For Bridges and Barrett, the fight against oppression and cruelty was ongoing, and as events in Europe would surely have informed the latter, far from won. Rather than feeling complacent about their smiling island, Tasmanians should be aware that the price to be paid for the present's relative freedom was vigilance; physical reminders of oppression and a proper understanding of their function were as necessary for Tasmanians as the grim piles of Auschwitz and Belsen were shortly to become for Germans.

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85 MERCURY, 18 September 1939.

86 BARRETT, *op. cit.*, 185.

87 *Ibid.*, 127.

In their very humanism, both authors adopted attitudes of righteous indignation not far removed from those of their nineteenth century counterparts, the liberal reformers who fought against the evils of slavery, child labour and transportation itself. Their style, to borrow Michael Roe's 'metaphor-model-stereotype' was 'Tasmanian'.[88] Their sympathy for convicts was a sympathy for "them".

There were, however, many Tasmanians, Clive Lord and Ogilvie himself among them, for whom convicts were "us". Some of these, such as Lord, would find it expedient to conceal their ancestry. Others, less successful, would manifest their origins in a class solidarity characterised by traditional resentment against the social elite. For this group, tales of horror, such as those purveyed by the Port Arthur guides, would be grist to the mill. The absolute belief in the veracity of such tales, augmented by the belief that nothing had changed, would help cement the values, politics and social perspective of this class.[89] To remain with Roe's typology, this group could be considered 'Vandiemonian'.

It would take some time before all Vandiemonians would feel free to admit their roots, longer still before convict ancestry could be worn as a badge of pride. Yet, Roe argues, following the Ogilvie government a psychological change did occur. With Ogilvie's premiership, the Vandiemonian strain was admitted into public life in a way that was both ostentatious and unapologetic. As a result of this:

> Tasmanians came to assert their full rights as Australians, rejecting the 'inferiority complex' of the past.

Given this, it is to be expected that a new way of viewing the past would become popularly acceptable, a way that admitted modern Tasmania to have convict roots, a way which regarded the convicts not as "them" to be denied, romanticised or pitied – but, significantly, as "us".

Such a historiography necessarily involved "white-washing". The crimes of the convicts could not have been heinous lest their descendants share in their shame. The punishments could not have been savage lest race-memories of humiliation breed a cowed and broken people. Nor could the overseers have been the monsters

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88 ROE, 1986, *op. cit.* (See page 208 n4).

89 The City of Hobart's Bicentennial exhibition, *This Southern Outpost*, to some extent achieved this. It made use of photographs to illustrate social continuities between the Hobart of 1846 and that of 1914. People from lower socio-economic areas who viewed the exhibition 'recognised this history, "the truth at last!" and offered stories of their own about exploitation and powerlessness in the face of the upper class oligarchy' (CLARK, J, 1991; Socialist Muck or the Truth at Last: the Bicentennial Exhibition of the Corporation of the City of Hobart, *Museums Australia Journal* 2/3, 105-111).

they were traditionally painted lest the present generation of Vandiemonians retain its ancient grudge against the island's leaders.

This approach to Tasmania's past was evident in Lord's short essay of 1926. But it took fifteen more years and the passing of the Ogilvie government before it came to fruition. This occurred in 1941 with the publication of *Shadow over Tasmania*.

Curiously, the book was published under the name of a 19 year-old cadet reporter from the *Mercury*, Beverley Coultman Smith. Assistance was acknowledged from Radcliffe, but the book was dedicated to Johnnis Danker. Smith also paid tribute to Danker's work in the text of his book, and was without doubt the *Mercury* correspondent who wrote articles on the Dane's eightieth and eighty first birthdays and finally on his death. However, he made no suggestion that *Shadow over Tasmania* was written collaboratively. Neither has Danker's manuscript come to light, and Smith, who died recently, said nothing to clear up the mystery.

Not that the authorship of *Shadow over Tasmania* is especially important, for in many ways the book is unremarkable. It reveals nothing new about the penal era; nor is its writing or thought particularly distinguished. There are nevertheless three things which make it a significant work. The first of these is its revolutionary position that the penal system was something 'of which Tasmanians should be proud, not ashamed – for it laid the foundations of Tasmania to-day'.[90]

Secondly, the book received official endorsement from Tasmania's Premier, Robert Cosgrove, who wrote in the foreword that it was 'a welcome departure that this book treats the convict days in a bright commonsense manner, with none of the morbidity and horror which have too often stamped such work'.[91]

Thirdly, by 1978, *Shadow over Tasmania* had been reprinted 18 times and sold 200,000 copies, making it the island's best seller ever, and certainly its most influential history book.

How, then, did Smith so successfully present the convict past as something which would induce in Tasmanians feelings of pride? In the first place, it was important that the system did not reflect poorly on the mother country:

> Britain's transportation of felons to the Australian territories was a far-sighted and, on the whole, successful colonisation system ... isolated cases of inhuman treatment cannot be denied, but on the

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90 SMITH, *op. cit.*, 150.

91 *Ibid.*, foreword.

> whole it has been exaggerated and libelled to such an extent that only a very shadowy semblance of the truth remains.[92]

Next, the fairness of the system had to be stressed; Smith therefore asserted that 'at no time was [the convict] beyond rehabilitation by his own efforts'.[93] This claim, of course, ignored completely the fate of those convicts assigned to bad masters, those against whom overseers bore grudges and those who lacked the talents or social graces to overcome the inevitable stigma which attached to the "old lag". But in war-time Tasmania, when all citizens, no matter what their ancestry, were needed, such egalitarian sentiments as Smith's served a very clear purpose.

In line with this, it was necessary to erase the time-honoured image of the convict as cowed, beaten and brutalised. Smith did admit that Macquarie Harbour was indeed "Hell on Earth", but added correctly that 'it never had a large population'.[94] The penal establishment the reputation of which he was most keen to rehabilitate was understandably the tourist mecca, Port Arthur. Consequently, his description of the life of an inmate there placed great stress upon the fine buildings, the gardens, the hospital, entertainment, holidays, schooling, training, and, remarkably, fun. The Model Prison was described, but not the punishment regime applied there. And in admitting – though not describing – the use of the lash, Smith added that its use was continued in the British army long after it was abolished in prisons.[95]

In depicting Point Puer, which he felt had been 'crucified', Smith failed to mention the frequent beatings the boys were given. He denied that sodomy took place, and, with rather more evidence, exposed the fallacies of 'suicide cliffs' and the 'underground cells'. As far as he was concerned, the establishment was 'well-conducted, the conditions good, and the training instructive and reformatory'.[96] In support of his argument, he was able to point to the alleged fact that several of Hobart's leading citizens had descended from Point Puer boys.[97]

If Smith portrayed the convicts as fairly treated and redeemable, it was also part of his intention to rehabilitate those charged with overseeing them. Arthur, for example, he described as 'a giant of a man'.[98] And where he felt that a gaoler or soldier had been maligned, he was at pains to set the record straight. 'Many

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92 SMITH, *op. cit.*, 9.

93 *Ibid.*, 10.

94 *Ibid.*, 40.

95 *Ibid.*, 58-60.

96 *Ibid.*, 70.

97 *Ibid.*, 73.

98 *Ibid.*, 43.

malicious lies', he wrote, 'have been told about the wreck of the *George the Third*'. He claimed that the soldiers who fired upon the convicts did so without orders, and then only to prevent the lifeboats from being swamped.

But rather than contemplate this grim tale, he urged, one should recall the story of the wreck of the *Governor Philip*, in which a young army officer gallantly sacrificed his life in rescuing as many convicts as possible before the ship went down.[99] Such a man, doubtless, would have made an excellent officer in the Second World War. Far better that the young descendants of convicts who in 1941 were required to enlist for action should believe their superiors to be of his stamp, than that they should confuse them with the fiendish creations of a Clarke or a Price Warung.

Although older attitudes towards the convict past did not die out overnight after the publication of *Shadow over Tasmania*, the book did help set the scene for a post-war Tasmania in which the islanders' relationship with their past differed radically from the uneasy relationship which had been normal before. The changing attitude towards the past was reflected in the changing attitude towards its relics. This was coloured by their unquestionable value as tourist attractions, their new-found acceptability and their increasing dilapidation. The focus of attention was, as ever, Port Arthur.

5.4 PORT ARTHUR: TOWARDS NATIONALISATION

5.4.1 The end of local control

In 1935, a Queensland visitor to Port Arthur drew attention to the site's shortcomings in a letter which was published in both the *Mercury* and the *Examiner*. He regretted that so many of the buildings were in private hands. He had not been able to get into the Powder Magazine 'for love or money'. He felt that the 'disfiguring advertisements' about the place spoiled the atmosphere. There was a lack of available information. He wished to browse around at leisure, but the system of allocating tourists to guides did not permit him to do so. Most importantly, he believed that the ruins would 'fast become more dilapidated unless something was done, and the state would lose one of its best tourist attractions'.[100] The Chairman of the SPB asked the Warden of the Tasman Council for his comment on the letter,

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99 SMITH, *op. cit.*, 38.

100 MERCURY, 14 June 1935.

but no reply has survived. Given the completeness of the correspondence file, it seems likely that one was never made.[101]

In a surprising turn-about after years of calling for the destruction of the ruins, the *Mercury* endorsed the calls of the visitor for more care to be taken of Port Arthur, because: 'Undoubtedly, [the ruins] form[ed] a great tourist asset'.[102] The following year, 1937, the year of the Church's centenary, saw the *Mercury* leading the call for preservation:

> The admiration of tourists and travellers the world over, so valuable an asset should not be allowed to continue its crumbling towards decay. In the centenary year of its opening for public worship what could be more fitting than the inauguration of a movement towards ensuring its permanency as an object of delight and service to future generations?[103]

In June, the Tasman Council Clerk wrote to the Director of the Public Works Department requesting money for the necessary repairs, and offering to put in one pound for every pound supplied. Parts of the building, he said, were in a very bad and dangerous condition'.[104] But by 1937 the relationship between Tasman Council and the Scenery Preservation Board had begun to deteriorate, and this affected the outcome of the request.

The SPB was concerned about a unilateral decision taken by Tasman Council in the administration of the reserves. The renewed leases agreed to in 1934 incorporated the council's wish to reduce the entry fee to 1/-, half of which was to be given to the guides, the rest spent on the reserves.[105] Yet in May 1937, the SPB learned that the council had restored the old entry fee of 1/6d without permission and contrary to the published agreement.[106] Undeterred by the rebuke it received for this breach, the council requested management of the reserves for a further three years from 1 July, and the entry fee to be officially restored to 1/6d. The SPB did recommend that the

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101 AB541/3, *Correspondence of the Tasman Municipal Council: Tourism*: Chair of SPB to Warden, Tasman Council, undated.

102 MERCURY, 15 June 1935.

103 MERCURY, 26 July 1937.

104 AB541/2, *Correspondence of the Tasman Municipal Council: PWD*: Council Clerk to Director of PWD, 4 June 1937.

105 AB541/3, *Correspondence of the Tasman Municipal Council: Tourism*: Council Clerk to Chair of SPB, 3 November 1934 and TASMANIAN GOVERNMENT GAZETTE, 27 November 1934.

106 AB541/3, *Correspondence of the Tasman Municipal Council: Tourism*: correspondence between Council Clerk and Chair of SPB, 18 May, 20 May and 24 May 1937.

leases be renewed, but the Minister for Transport still had to give his approval and he was now wary.[107]

By early September, when the lease had still not been signed, the council was given an answer by the PWD to its earlier request for funds with which to repair the Church. The Minister for Public Works informed it that the government was prepared to pay half of an estimated £400 for 'comprehensive repairs'.[108] The Clerk replied, thanking him but stating that the council could not accept until the leases were confirmed. This did not occur for over a month, and then the Minister was prepared to grant them only until 30 June 1938, in spite of the SPB's recommendation. The council, which only had £8 in its fund for maintenance of the reserves, wrote to the Minister declining his offer; with no security on its lease beyond six months, it was not prepared to run up a deficit.[109] So no work was carried out on the Church in its centenary year, and it continued to crumble.

Over the next few months, there was further public comment on the condition of the ruins. In February 1938, a party of English tourists regretted that 'this historic old spot was being gradually allowed to fall into decay, with the ruins fast disappearing'.[110] In March, the Victorian Minister for Electricity felt that the condition of the buildings was such that they should be either restored or demolished. The Acting Premier of Tasmania went on record in support of this view. Both favoured restoration.[111]

In April 1938, when the Tasman Council wrote to the SPB requesting a further 3-year extension on its leases, the Chairman wrote back saying that before a decision was made, the Auditor-General would be approached for an audited statement of revenue and expenditure on the reserves for 1936/37. For the first time, the council was required to break down the expenditure under clear headings. Of the £367 remaining after guides' wages had been paid from the takings, only £36 was identified as having been spent on the reserves and £39 on the preservation of

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107 AA264, *Minutes of the Scenery Preservation Board*, 16 July 1937. It is possible that moves were afoot to oust the council from its controlling position at this time, for one day before the SPB meeting a Tasman Councillor wrote to a colleague from Hobart asking: 'Have you heard about the leases? Common talk here is that we are not getting them' (AB541/3, *Correspondence of the Tasman Municipal Council: Tourism*: Briggs to Nicholson, 15 July 1937).

108 AB541/2, *Correspondence of the Tasman Municipal Council: PWD*: Secretary of Minister for Public Works to Council Clerk, 27 August 1937.

109 *Ibid.*: Council Clerk to Minister for Public Works, 7 November 1937.

110 MERCURY, 17 February 1938.

111 MERCURY, 22 March 1938.

buildings. Of the rest, £39 had been spent on roads, £42 on electric light and plant and £228 on the Town Hall, which was the converted Asylum and not a reserved building. When asked whether these amounts were properly chargeable to the reserves, the Council Clerk admitted that there was a 'difficulty of apportionment'; some facilities, such as lavatories, he said, were for the benefit of tourists, but of course local people had access.[112]

There can be little doubt that the people of Port Arthur benefited from the income derived from the reserves. At the same time it is difficult not to sympathise with the point made by the Council Clerk. In 1928 and 1929, attempts were made to argue that one-third of the money collected at the turnstiles should be spent on the main road from Eaglehawk Neck to Port Arthur because the tourist traffic over the road necessitated frequent repairs.[113] The Chair of the moribund SPB remained firm: the proclamation required all of the money collected to be spent on the reserves and that was how it would be spent. Thus, since the presence of the reserves involved the Tasman Council in certain expenses which could only be met from the rates, it is perhaps understandable that the councillors decided to apply some of the income from the reserves more generally than was strictly intended.

Such a rationalisation, however, was not acceptable to all of Port Arthur's citizens. For instance, the *Port Arthur Tourist and Progress Association*, at its meeting of 31 May 1938, agreed to write to the Premier 'asking that the government take over control of the ruins, at the same time pointing out that at the current rate of decay they would soon cease to be Tasmania's main tourist asset'.[114] The following day, an unauthorised account of the meeting appeared in the *Mercury*. It included a claim by Radcliffe, who was currently at loggerheads with the council over the level of his rates, that 'much of the money collected by the council ... was being expended on roads and other work instead of on the buildings'.[115] The Council was deeply indignant. It regarded the Progress Association's remarks as 'untruthful and unjust'.[116] It claimed to have spent 'thousands of pounds on the upkeep and repair of the buildings' as well as a great deal of time, worry and care. Any money collected at the turnstiles which had been spent on roads was spent on roads

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112 AB541/1, *Correspondence of the Tasman Municipal Council: Audit.*

113 AB541/2, *Correspondence of the Tasman Municipal Council: PWD*: Council Clerk to Minister for Public Works, 4 August 1929 and Council Clerk to Chair of SPB, 31 May 1929.

114 NS 1086/1, *Minutes of the Port Arthur Tourist & Progress Association*, 31 May 1938.

115 MERCURY, 1 June 1938.

116 AB541/3, *Correspondence of the Tasman Municipal Council: Tourism*: Council Clerk to Secretary PAT&PA, 3 June 1938.

within the town boundaries. In all, the Association's statements 'showed a disgraceful lack of appreciation of what the Council had done for the town'.[117]

The council's protests were in vain. Emmett was planning to draw the 'apparent misuse of funds' to the attention of the Minister.[118] Furthermore, the investigation coincided with the Ogilvie Government's decision to expand the role of the SPB. Its membership was increased to ten, £2,000 was placed in the estimates for carrying out provisions of the Act, new sub-Boards were planned to manage the major parks and one was proposed for Tasman Peninsula where three more scenic reserves were about to be declared.[119] Control of Port Arthur was duly taken away from the Tasman Council and handed over to the new sub-board of the SPB.

5.4.2 The best laid plans...

The ten-member Port Arthur and Eaglehawk Neck Board included both Tasman councillors and members of the Progress Association as well as public servants and the Chair of the SPB. In a thoroughly approving editorial, the *Mercury* stated that the new board was fully representative of all interests, and would ensure that the ruins were efficiently protected from further damage.[120] At its first meeting, the board elected Emmett as its Chair, the Peninsula's reserves were inspected and a PWD report on the restoration of the Church was called for, since in the opinion of the board these ruins 'were of the greatest interest, and were in urgent need of attention'. It was estimated that £500 would suffice to stabilise all the ruins.[121]

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117 MERCURY, 2 June 1938.

118 AA264, *Minutes of the Scenery Preservation Board*, 6 June 1938. The claims of misuse of funds were further investigated. In August 1938, Colin Pitt, the Secretary for Lands and Chair of the SPB, sent a memorandum to his Minister in which he stated: 'The Council has been in an unique position in that it has, in effect, subsidised itself for ordinary Municipal Services from a service other than rates and charges, as is the established practice in other municipalities. It is obvious that this is quite wrong, and cannot be continued' (AA610, *General Correspondence Port Arthur Scenic Reserve 1938-1966:* Secretary for Lands to Minister for Lands, 9 August 1938). By December, however, Tasman Council had been replaced by a Commission and Pitt thought it was not worth proceeding with a claim for reimbursement (AA610: Pitt to Minister, 2 December 1938).

119 These were Eaglehawk Neck and foreshore, Waterfall Bay, Blowhole and Tasman's Arch (all proclaimed on 28 June 1938).

120 MERCURY, 27 June 1938.

121 MERCURY, 12 July 1938.

Like so many similar estimates in the past, this one was to prove hopelessly inadequate. Furthermore, the government was shortly to announce its intention of acquiring more Port Arthur buildings, a policy which was to result in further drains on the SPB's resources. Nor were the Port Arthur buildings the only ones for which preservation was urged. For, when the Minister for Lands and Works announced in June 1938 that it was the cabinet's intention to place all the Port Arthur ruins and reserves 'in thorough repair' over a two year period,[122] he awakened interest in another nearby ruin, the Coal Mines at Saltwater River.

In a long article accompanied by a photograph, the *Mercury* made an impassioned plea for the preservation of this site. With a small amount of attention to the road, the writer argued, it could comprise an interesting stop on a round trip from Port Arthur. But the ruins had been entirely neglected, with the usual consequences:

> The despoliation of the Coal Mines Station ruins by the removal of building stone and bricks goes on indiscriminately, and a fine tourist attraction will soon be lost if something is not done to bring about a due measure of control.... Having directed attention to a neglected tourist asset, it is for public-spirited citizens to act.[123]

Two months later, the SPB recommended the site for reservation under the Act. It was the first historic reserve to be proclaimed for sixteen years.[124]

In 1938, the Port Arthur and Eaglehawk Neck Board was asked to recommend suitable additional properties for purchase. It recommended the Powder Magazine and Smith O'Brien's Cottage (both owned by Radcliffe), Government Cottage, the Police Court and remains of the Hospital. In July 1939, Dwyer-Gray, who was then Premier, announced the government's decision to acquire these buildings. To justify the proposed expense, he stated:

> The Government appreciates the commercial value of Port Arthur in relation to its historic associations, and recognises that as time goes on these buildings and relics will become more and more valuable. Too many of the old buildings and relics in various parts of the State have been allowed to disappear. Relics have been bought privately, and have been taken away from the State. Buildings have passed into private hands and been pulled down. The Government has determined that the most interesting of the sites at Port Arthur should be acquired before it is too late, and hopes to make it a 'show place' that will become world-famous.[125]

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122 MERCURY, 29 June 1938.

123 MERCURY, 12 July 1938.

124 AA264, *Minutes of the Scenery Preservation Board*, 6 October 1938. The reserve was proclaimed on 21 December 1938. Between 1922 and June 1938, only one reserve of any type was proclaimed.

125 MERCURY, 21 July 1939.

The government also planned to purchase the Commandant's House and to equip it to house a museum of relics which they were negotiating to buy from Radcliffe. The Premier believed that there was no reason why, with the fees realised at the turnstile and for entry to the museum, Port Arthur could not be made self-supporting. Confident that the plans would be funded by parliament, the government proceeded with the purchases of the Commandant's House and Government Cottage, which were proclaimed as reserves on 4 October 1939. The government, however, had reckoned without the input of the upper house.

James Murdoch MLC, who had done his best to secure funds for the Tasman Council to restore the old Church, led the attack. He said that the buildings were rotten, and not worth the money it was proposed to spend on them. Others revived the old cry that the ruins were a monument to cruelty and barbarism and should be razed. That buildings had been purchased prior to the upper house's approval of funds produced outrage. Even the few government supporters in the Legislative Council were lukewarm in their support for the government's plans.[126]

Finally, after a conference of managers from both houses, a compromise was reached: £2,500 was approved for purchase of buildings and £500 for improvements to the Commandant's House, but the £4,250 sought for the purchase of the museum was rejected.[127] Following approval, negotiations with Radcliffe over the Powder Magazine and Smith O'Brien's Cottage proceeded. They were acquired and proclaimed as reserves on 21 February 1940. The offer made for the ruined Hospital and the Police Court was not acceptable to the owner, and the Board decided not to buy them at the price demanded.[128]

Throughout the war years, visitation of Port Arthur understandably dropped significantly, thus reducing the income generated by the site. The Port Arthur Board, charged with managing and maintaining the reserves from its revenue exactly as had the Tasman Council before it,[129] and prevented under the Act from overdrawing its suspense account,[130] could do nothing to halt the decay of the buildings without special dispensations either from the general vote to the SPB or directly from the Department of Public Works. The former was reduced from £2,000 in 1939/40 to £1,750 in 1940/41 and held at this level until 1945. The annual division of this

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126 MERCURY, 13 and 14 December 1939.

127 MERCURY, 16 December 1939.

128 AA597, *Minute Book of the Port Arthur and Eaglehawk Neck Reserves Board*, 15 November 1939.

129 TASMANIAN GOVERNMENT GAZETTE, 25 June 1941.

130 AA610, *General Correspondence Port Arthur Scenic Reserve 1938-1966*: Governor-in-Council's Authority, 6 July 1938.

meagre sum among the competing sub-boards of the SPB was only achieved after considerable discussion.[131] Moreover, between 1938 and 1941, sixteen new reserves had been proclaimed, so that by the end of 1941 the Board controlled forty-two reserves covering a total of nearly half a million acres and including eight historic buildings in generally ruinous condition. The burst of enthusiasm for the preservation of the state's heritage, which was recognised by the SPB as owing much to Ogilvie,[132] put huge strains on the Board's limited resources.

The Port Arthur Suspense Account was opened with £50 in December 1939. In the following year, the level of SPB subsidy was increased to £580 in order to permit repairs to the Church. It was dropped to £60 in the following year, then raised marginally to £80. In 1942/43, when income from admissions dropped to a low of £103, subsidy was raised to £200, maintained at this level the next year, then reduced to £150 for 1944/45, by which time visitation was again beginning to rise.[133]

This inadequate level of funding allowed next to no work to be carried out on the reserves, and the buildings recently acquired needed attention just as did those long owned and neglected by the state. In 1940, £59 was found to put the Powder Magazine in a condition fit to receive visitors,[134] and nearly £300 was spent to make the Commandant's House habitable.[135] It was then let for 15/- per week. Three years later, a prospective tenant required a further £200 worth of work to be done on it before he would move in. The Board considered selling the property, but changed its mind when it realised that it could be used as rent-free accommodation for a ranger.[136]

This new position was filled on 1 May 1943, the intention being that the man employed would maintain the reserves, clear blackberries and carry out necessary work on the Commandant's House and the Model Prison.[137] For a few months all went well, then the ranger, a returned soldier, developed an 'anxiety neurosis' and

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131 AA264, *Minutes of the Scenery Preservation Board*, 30 January 1940, 6 December 1940, 5 December 1941, 6 November 1942, 2 July 1943 and 8 December 1943.

132 This was recognised in the motion of regret passed at the SPB meeting shortly after Ogilvie's death (*ibid.*, 22 June 1939).

133 *Ibid.*, 30 January 1940, 6 December 1940, 5 December 1941, 6 November 1942, 2 July 1943 and 8 December 1943.

134 AA597, *Minute Book of the Port Arthur and Eaglehawk Neck Reserves Board*, Annual Report 1940/41.

135 *Ibid.*, 17 May 1940.

136 *Ibid.*, 20 February 1943.

137 *Ibid.*, 8 May 1943.

went 'raving mad' after a few drinks. He became incapable of work and he and his family refused to leave the Commandant's House.[138] Meanwhile, no work was done on the reserve, the returns for 1943/44 showing £36 spent on materials for repairs and, for the following year, only £1.[139]

Vandalism and theft became rife, and buildings deteriorated further.[140] Even the small tasks which the local committee agreed to undertake, such as removal of ivy from the Church, could not be accomplished due to a lack of labour. The jetty on Dead Island washed away and was not replaced for the same reason.[141] The Penitentiary, which was closed for interior inspection in 1940 because the walls were deemed unsafe, was not re-opened throughout the war years.[142] In 1943, archways and walls of the neglected Model Prison were regarded as 'on the verge of collapse';[143] no attempt was made to fix them. And throughout the war the hapless ex-ranger continued to live rent-free in the Commandant's House. It was estimated that £250 would be required to render this habitable,[144] and a meeting of the Board in August 1945 resolved that the best solution to the problems it presented would be to knock it all down except the front section.[145] Of all the reserved buildings, only the Church was subject to extensive restoration, and even in this case the results were far from satisfactory.

The PWD estimated in 1938 that £400 would suffice to restore the Church; in 1939, £500 was applied for, and by February 1940 expenses had blown out to £563. It was thought that a further £400 would be needed to complete the job, and the PWD advised that a ceiling of £650 would be set.[146] The Port Arthur Board, which wished to restore the Church completely, pressed the Minister for a further £650. It used to bolster its arguments a letter from the Captain of the *Queen Mary* who believed the building 'easily Australia's most beautiful architectural gem'.[147] The

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138 AA597, *Minute Book of the Port Arthur and Eaglehawk Neck Reserves Board*, 20 September 1943.

139 *Ibid.*, Annual Reports 1943/44 and 1944/45.

140 *Ibid.*, 1 February 1944. The turnstile till was robbed in January. It contained £12/12/6d. Vandalism was rife throughout the reserves during 1943.

141 *Ibid.*, 18 February 1942 and 18 August 1942.

142 *Ibid.*, 17 May 1940.

143 *Ibid.*, Annual Report 1943/44.

144 *Ibid.*, 29 May 1944.

145 *Ibid.*, 10 August 1945.

146 *Ibid.*, 3 September 1938, 27 April 1939 and 19 February 1940.

147 AA610, *General Correspondence Port Arthur Scenic Reserve 1938-1966*: Chair SPB to Minister for Public Works, 22 September 1941.

Minister made a further £400 available. Between 1939 and August 1944, £945 was spent on the Church,[148] yet its west wall still required a complete rebuild.[149] Neither money nor labour could be found to undertake this task.

5.4.3 The Brooker plan

The government was aware of the problems and of the potential value of Port Arthur to the state. In August 1944, the town was visited by the Minister for Lands and Public Works, Edward Brooker. He was accompanied by an adviser who described the scene which met them as one of 'utter desolation'.[150] At the subsequent meeting with the Port Arthur and Eaglehawk Neck Board, Brooker revealed his vision for the site. He wanted to present the buildings as they were a century ago, but 'in the midst of the happy surroundings of the present day'. Government Cottage should be demolished to give visitors a better view of the Church. Likewise, the Penitentiary should go and be replaced by a pavilion where perhaps a model of the old building could be exhibited.[151] It was thought that after the war the reserves would cost £1,000 per year to run, but the Minister believed that if they were enhanced by the acquisition of a museum, there was no reason why they could not be self-supporting. He asked the Board to present a plan for cabinet to consider on 5 September. He also requested a picture to show what the result would look like.

Accordingly, the dutiful Board produced a five-year plan which included (in order of priority): the complete restoration of the Church on its original plan and a clean up of the surrounding grounds including the demolition of Government Cottage; partial restoration of the Model Prison; repairs to the Powder Magazine; repairs to the Commandant's Cottage and the purchase of a museum to be housed therein; and finally the demolition of the Penitentiary and erection of a pavilion on its site. The proposal was costed at £32,000 or £6,400 for each of the five years it would

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148 AA610, *General Correspondence Port Arthur Scenic Reserve 1938-1966*: Secretary of SPB to Bessel, 3 August 1944.

149 *Ibid.*: Chief Architect to Director of PWD, 8 April 1941.

150 AA597, *Minute Book of the Port Arthur and Eaglehawk Neck Reserves Board*, 24 August 1944.

151 Brooker's desire to get rid of the Penitentiary was not new. When the plan to include money in the estimates for purchase of Port Arthur buildings was first debated in the House of Assembly on 7 December 1939, Brooker (then Chief Secretary) suggested 'the old factory-looking building' on the foreshore should disappear, and the front could be laid out in gardens and lawns (MERCURY, 8 December 1939).

take to execute.[152] This worked out at considerably more than the Board's last post-war works estimate, carried out in the previous year, which put the cost of complete restoration at £6,650.[153] Cabinet appears also to have been staggered by the enormity of the sum requested; and although, according to Brooker, the scheme was approved, commitment was only made to the placing of £2,000 on the 1944/45 forward estimates.

But no picture had been supplied, and Brooker still wanted one.[154] To complete this task, the Board requested the services of W McGowan, Superintendent of Reserves at Launceston,[155] and it is largely thanks to his eleventh-hour intervention that the Brooker plan was scotched.

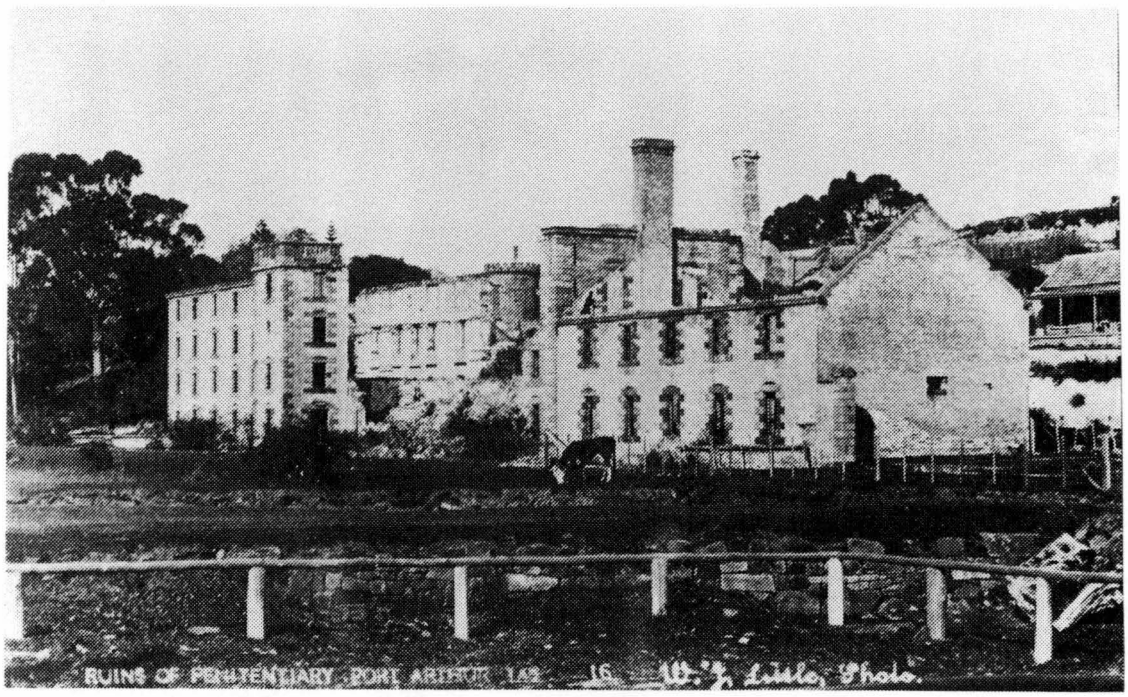

FIGURE 5.2

THE PENITENTIARY RUINS

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152 AA610, *General Correspondence Port Arthur Scenic Reserve 1938-1966*: Chair, Port Arthur Board to Minister for Public Works, 30 August 1944.

153 AA597, *Minute Book of the Port Arthur and Eaglehawk Neck Reserves Board*, 8 May 1943.

154 *Ibid.*, 3 November 1944

155 AA610, *General Correspondence Port Arthur Scenic Reserve 1938-1966*: Secretary for Lands to Town Clerk, Launceston, 29 November 1944.

5.4.4 The McGowan plan

The McGowan Plan was radical and flew in the face of the vision of Brooker as endorsed by the Board. McGowan predicated his proposals on the belief that the attraction of Port Arthur was 'because of its historical nature'. Consequently:

> to alter it by endeavouring to make modern improvements would have a tendency to loss of splendour. Tourists can see modern gardens and parks in almost any township, but historical buildings of such a nature are very rare.[156]

He proposed therefore not to:

> attempt to intermingle the "new with the old", but to preserve the old landmarks in such a way as to convey to those who visit them, the architectural nature of the times and its historical value.

Moreover, he wished the results to be enjoyed 'not only by visitors from overseas, but also for those residing in the State'.

The bold plan required the acquisition of all lands in the Port Arthur area, so as to allow strict supervision of any future building. Structures not of historical significance, the existing hotel, fences, shops and private houses which post-dated the convict period, were to be demolished. All structures dating from the penal period were to be retained in their present state; they were simply to be stabilised and cleaned up. Far from wishing to demolish the Penitentiary, McGowan regarded it as 'one of the most outstanding features of Port Arthur'. He wanted only the necessary repairs to be carried out on it to preserve its character. Having delivered his plan, McGowan took no further part in the debate over its implementation and died within the year.

When the Port Arthur Board first had the McGowan Plan read out to them, somewhat surprisingly they agreed with it in principle.[157] When they next considered it, however, after two months reflection, there was a 'long discussion'.[158] Mr Pitman thought the plan 'too socialistic'; E Mulcahy agreed. For the others, the very boldness of buying a whole town appealed. After all, there seemed little sense in the government spending thousands on the area if private property owners were to be the beneficiaries. Perhaps the residents could remain as the Board's tenants; perhaps they could be relocated. That mattered little. The main thing was that if the

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156 AA610, *General Correspondence Port Arthur Scenic Reserve 1938-1966*: McGowan to Chair, Port Arthur Board, 22 May 1945.

157 AA597, *Minute Book of the Port Arthur and Eaglehawk Neck Reserves Board*, 8 June 1945.

158 *Ibid.*, 10 August 1945.

government was about to spend large sums of money it must have control. Tourism, Mr Brenehan argued, was going to be the salvation of the Peninsula.

Finally, Emmett moved that the government acquire the lands mentioned in the McGowan Report, including the boarding house. All voted in favour except Pitman and Mulcahy, who recorded their dissensions. The Scenery Preservation Board, at its next meeting, endorsed Emmett's motion and recommended that cabinet approve the McGowan scheme.[159] Its subsequent implementation was to form a major plank of the Cosgrove government's post-war reconstruction policy.

Attention was paid to Port Arthur because of the belief that after the war it would prove a sound investment,[160] but there were many other historical relics in the state, both fixed and movable, the economic value of which it was less easy to calculate. Increasingly, these were being promoted to tourists; increasingly they were becoming dilapidated or disappearing.

5.5 EFFORTS TO PRESERVE

Throughout the 1930s and '40s , there was increasing recognition of the value of Tasmania's historical relics as tourist attractions. In many of the older settled areas such as Bothwell, Hamilton, Deloraine and Evandale, preserved Georgian architecture was a significant attraction. But the widening tourist-historic landscape did not contain only features of architectural interest. Throughout the length of the Main Road were to be found other relics of the colonial days. At Tunbridge there

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159 AA264, *Minutes of the Scenery Preservation Board*, 28 September 1945.

160 Travel restrictions and financial stringency during the war depleted visitor numbers markedly. In 1940/41, 2,893 equivalent adults passed through the toll, 2,000 fewer than the previous year (AA597, *Minute Book of the Port Arthur and Eaglehawk Neck Reserves Board*, Annual Report 1940/41). This figure was arrived at by counting a child as 1/2, so there may have been considerably more visitors, child and adult, than the figure indicates. In 1941/42, the darkest year of the war, the turnstile counter read only 1,3681/2 (*ibid.*, Annual Report 1942-43). The figure remained under 2,000 until 1944/45, when it reached 2,631 (*ibid.*, Annual Report 1944-45). However, it was expected by the government that the post-war visitation would quickly rise to 10,000 per year, an expectation which was soon realised. In fact, it was commonly stated that Port Arthur attracted 10,000 visitors per year even before the war. Col Blacklow used this figure in 1939 in an attempt to convince his fellow Legislative Councillors that the government was correct in seeking to purchase more Port Arthur buildings (MERCURY, 13 December 1939).

was an old stone roller,[161] outside Melton Mowbray, there was a stone horse trough said to weigh four tons.[162] These and other relics were listed in various tourist guides and in a *Mercury* article of 1937: *Tales of Tasmanian History – Landmarks that Spell Adventure to Tourists.*

Other areas too were promoted to tourists on the strength of their historical associations. One of these was Bruny (or Bruni) Island, south east of Hobart. The island's Adventure Bay was renowned as a stopping place for various early navigators and for its subsequent whaling industry. In 1920, the island's history and attractions formed the subject matter of a series of articles in the *World*,[163] and in 1943 Charles Barrett was accompanied around the island by P W Kellaway, who pointed out to him the various tourist and historic spots.[164]

The potential value of Hobart's history to the tourist industry was also perceived by some. Various schemes were suggested to realise it. In 1930, Roy Bridges believed that the impact of the Depression upon tourism could be reduced by finding ways to detain tourists longer in the city. He advocated:

> A more skilled guidance of tourists, more broadcast lectures by students and true lovers of the old city, in conjunction with the interpretation of public and private collections of historic interest ... these should form the policy of City Council and Tourist office this season.[165]

The second suggestion, put by the *Mercury* in 1936, was that 'a guide well versed in historic fact' be employed to conduct tourists around the historical tablets and landmarks of Hobart.[166]

Both suggestions were disregarded, although in 1942, as part of the celebrations to mark the centenary of Hobart's incorporation as a city, the *Mercury* did publish a series of articles by Basil Rait. These were later released in book form, without which Charles Barrett believed, no visitor to the capital was '"complete"'.[167] The section of Rait's book, "They Still Endure", provides brief details of many of

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161 MERCURY, 8 January 1937; *Tales of Tasmanian History – Landmarks that Spell Adventure to Tourists.*

162 DYER, *op. cit.*, 177.

163 WORLD, 9 July, 24 July and 18 September 1940.

164 BARRETT, *op. cit.*, 214 *et seq.*

165 ARGUS, 16 August 1930.

166 MERCURY, April 1936.

167 BARRETT, *op. cit.*, 140.

Hobart's oldest buildings.[168] It was the first such guide to the capital, and the first step taken towards any form of historical interpretation of Hobart.

However, despite the value of Tasmania's historic relics, little was done to preserve either the buildings and structures or the even more vulnerable movable relics.

5.5.1 Fixed heritage

The references in the tourist literature after 1934 to Tasmania's historic tourist attractions indicate that they were largely neglected. On Settlement Island, Charles Barrett had to 'break a path through the blackberry jungle' in order to find the ruins. The shelter hut 'looked as if it had been unused for years'.[169] Risdon, he found 'singularly drab-looking and unimpressive'.[170] The historic landscape was not only neglected, it was increasingly being depleted.

The upturn in the economy in the mid-1930s saw development account for many old stone buildings. In 1935, the remains of the Haunted House at Granton were pulled down. Shortly afterwards, the Woolpack Inn, Gretna, which had been subjected to raids by Martin Cash, suffered a similar fate.[171] In 1935, Cooley's Inn, Moonah (dating from 1830) and the old Longley Hotel were replaced;[172] Hobart's White Hart Inn (1831) was rebuilt in 1937; in 1938, it was followed by the Wheatsheaf, the Globe, Freemasons' and the Empire, all located in the capital.[173]

Owners of private homes too succumbed to the temptation to "modernise". Charles Barrett described an encounter with the owner of a 'lovely old farmhouse' thirty miles from Hobart. The man intended to pull it down. He told Barrett:

> "[I]t may look picturesque and all that; but my wife and I prefer comfort. We have made up our minds to build a real up-to-date bungalow. Take as many snaps as you like. The ramshackle place won't be standing when you come this way again – unless that be pretty soon."[174]

One potent reason for the neglect of old stone buildings was the cost of their upkeep. This factor affected all buildings, urban and rural, commercial and private,

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168 RAIT, B W, 1942; *Centenary of the City of Hobart*; Mercury, Hobart, 9-10.

169 BARRETT, *op. cit.*, 51.

170 *Ibid.*, 159.

171 MERCURY, 1 January 1936 and 21 January 1936.

172 MERCURY, 16 May 1935 and 31 May 1935.

173 MERCURY, 3 November 1937, 9 January 1938, 16 March 1938, 4 May 1938 and 6 September 1938.

174 BARRETT, *op. cit.*, 140.

secular and sacred. Just as it was uneconomical to preserve the Main Road's celebrated Halfway House Inn once Oatlands Licensing Court had deemed it surplus to requirements in 1932,[175] so the 95 year-old Windemere Church proved too expensive to maintain as its congregation declined. In 1937, the latter was in danger of collapse,[176] and the former, which Charles Barrett thought should be declared a 'National Monument',[177] was allowed to degenerate into a ruin.

FIGURE 5.3

THE FRONT DOOR OF "HALFWAY HOUSE"

Many of the Georgian houses which graced the large rural estates also fell into disrepair in the late 1930s as new federal tax measures penalised their owners in unprecedented ways. Some were abandoned. These were highly vulnerable. In 1949, the cottage of John Pascoe Fawkner, probably the oldest wooden building extant in Tasmania,[178] had, 'like most ancient untenanted buildings ... suffered greatly from vandalism'.[179] And all along the Hobart to Launceston road there were the remains of stone stables which in the 1930s were 'sorry ruins'.[180]

Many calls were made throughout the period for the preservation and exploitation of places with tourist appeal. For example, A D Baker, in *Tasmania, Now and Then*,

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175 MERCURY, 31 December 1932. Another story by Rowlands.

176 EXAMINER, 29 October 1937.

177 BARRETT, *op. cit.*, 113.

178 AA264, *Minutes of the Scenery Preservation Board*, 21 January 1949.

179 MERCURY, undated c1930, included in NS 23, *Hurst papers*.

180 MERCURY, 8 January 1937.

called for an extension of the Risdon reserve to include the old government cottage and gardens. The garden could then be cultivated, and afternoon tea served in the renovated cottage. 'This is historic ground', he wrote, 'the very beginning of Tasmania, of inestimable value to the State as a tourist attraction, and to be regarded with veneration by all!'[181]

In Launceston in 1933, it was proposed to pull down the police offices, court and the remainder of the old gaol. These had been described by the *Examiner* as 'some of the oldest and most historic buildings in Australia'.[182] Local citizens, dismayed by the threat of such a loss, advocated the retention of the 'gaol wall and historic gateway'. E G Ogilvie, the Attorney-General and brother of the Premier, when questioned, said such views would be treated sympathetically.[183]

In 1936, no less a person than Emmett called for the restoration and preservation of the tombs of 'the men and women illustrious in the State's history'. He cited St David's Park as an example of a way in which this might be done.[184]

In Oatlands, there was an old windmill, erected in the 1850s. Although fire had destroyed its sails and woodwork in 1908, it was a popular attraction and drew many artists to the area. In 1933, two of these, H B Herbert and Charles Wheeler, both from Melbourne, advocated the mill's restoration.[185]

The period also heard Tasmania's first call for the preservation of a historic wreck in a plea to preserve the *Otago*, the only vessel to have been commanded by Joseph Conrad, which had been left to rot in a bay on the Derwent. 'What sheer folly', thundered the *Age Literary Supplement*, 'in an island thronged with tourists'.[186]

Further potential was pointed out when Ingle Hall, Hobart's oldest building, came up for auction in 1935. It was suggestion that it should be purchased by the government and used as a tourist office.[187] But the government showed no interest in the proposal, and, shortly before the auction, the building's owner, the *Mercury*, was speculating resignedly that: 'Its new owner, whoever he may be, will probably

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181 BAKER, A D, 1938; *Tasmania, Now and Then*; Walch's, Hobart, 68.

182 EXAMINER, 8 July 1933.

183 MERCURY, 27 May 1935.

184 MERCURY, 19 May 1936.

185 MERCURY, 25 January 1933.

186 AGE LITERARY SUPPLEMENT, 3 February 1940.

187 MERCURY, 8 January 1935; letter to the editor.

reduce the familiar old building to a crumbling heap, and erect in its stead a structure more suitable to the times'.[188]

Many more reasoned pleas for the preservation of historically significant places were made during this period. The most passionate was probably Barrett's for Wybalenna, which he believed:

> should be honoured as a page of Tasmania's history, enclosed by a high stone wall, with wrought iron gates, and be declared a National Monument. And there should be some memorial to the nameless dead, the aborigines whose graves are as those of convicts buried on the Isle of the Dead, in Port Arthur's bay. Sheep have grazed where they lie, those poor exiles from their own beautiful land – the Isle of Mountains.[189]

FIGURE 5.4

MANALAGANNA'S GRAVE, WYBALENNA

Not one of the above suggestions resulted in discernible public debate, let alone action. The only gesture towards a broader concern for preservation came in 1934 when an attempt was made by the Tasmanian Institute of Architects to form a special committee to preserve historic buildings.[190] The following year, this "Historic Preservation Committee" sought information from councils and other bodies on

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188 MERCURY, 19 January 1935. Fortunately, the building did not sell and the *Mercury* preserved it.

189 BARRETT, *op. cit.*, 246.

190 MERCURY, 28 July 1934.

'buildings of historic or architectural value'.[191] What this investigation led to is unclear.

Despite the generally gloomy picture, steps were taken to preserve a few historic buildings. Most significant was the Lady Franklin Museum, which Hobart City Council was finally persuaded to take over in 1936.[192] Two years later, £200 was put aside for the purpose of restoration, but the museum's condition was still regarded as a disgrace.[193] A new fence and gate were provided in 1939,[194] the interior was renovated,[195] but the galvanised iron roof remained for the duration of the war.[196] The museum's centenary in 1942 passed quietly, and after the war the council quickly came to realise that it had no vision for the building. By 1947, it was seeking for ways in which it could get rid of it.

More successful were the efforts of the council in respect of an old semaphore station. The *Tasmanian Mail* found these relics 'among the more interesting and less nauseating remaining links with Tasmania's penal settlement days'.[197] They were originally operated by ticket-of-leave convicts under the control of an officer, and were used to convey messages around the colony until 1858 when the electric telegraph took over. Since they were generally situated on hilltops, they quickly fell into disrepair once abandoned. Nevertheless, as examples of early technology and ingenuity rather than of the brutality of the System, they intrigued without offending. In 1936, there was a lengthy article in the *Mercury* on the ruins of the station buildings on Mt Direction, north of Launceston; with a degree of hyperbole, it described them as '[w]ith the exception of the old church at Port Arthur, probably the most solid ruin in Tasmania'.[198] Immediately following the publication of the article, several Launceston citizens resolved to open up the track to the summit 'as a resort for tourists'.[199]

Perhaps following this lead, in 1940, the Reserves Committee of Hobart City Council, at the instigation of the Tasmanian Society, took the decision to restore the semaphore site in Prince's Park, Hobart. The restored station was dedicated at a

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191 MERCURY, 20 September 1935.

192 RAIT, *op. cit.*, 10.

193 MERCURY, 27 March 1938.

194 MERCURY, 27 March 1939.

195 MERCURY, 9 April 1943.

196 BARRETT, *op. cit.*, 159.

197 TASMANIAN MAIL, 16 March 1933.

198 MERCURY, 6 May 1936.

199 MERCURY, 7 May 1936.

ceremony conducted by the Lord Mayor.[200] This project was the first attempt by a sphere of government in Tasmania to preserve a structure of convict provenance other than a Port Arthur building.

Such was the financial drain of the Port Arthur reserves on the limited resources of the Scenery Preservation Board that it could do little in relation to the preservation of Tasmania's other historic buildings, sites and relics. In 1939, the tiny reserve around the George III Monument was enlarged to encompass 25 acres.[201] In 1943 and 1944, the Tasman Monument in Dunalley and the D'Entrecasteaux Monument respectively, both originally erected by the Tasmanian Society, were reserved.

The only historical site reserved by the SPB was Richmond Gaol, which was considered by some to offer to the tourist 'more striking evidence of the method of the System than the ruins of the Penitentiary or the Model Prison'.[202]

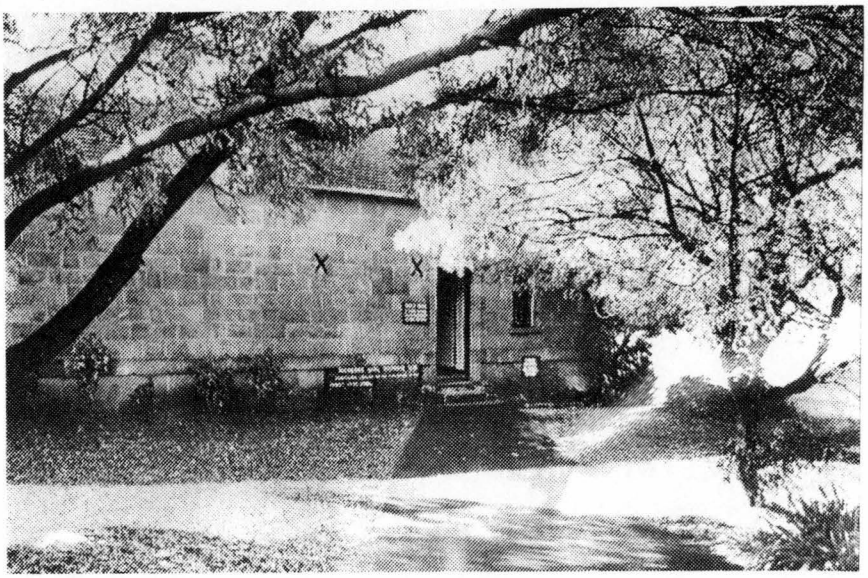

FIGURE 5.5

RICHMOND GAOL

Although smaller in scope than Port Arthur, it had not been swept by fire. It did, however, require a new roof, an improvement which the Scenery Preservation Board costed at £200 in 1939. Reroofing was discussed but held over 'pending the provision of funds'.[203] The subject was not raised again until 1945, when it was

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200 LEADER, 9 January 1940.

201 Proclaimed: 26 April 1939.

202 AUSTRALASIAN, 19 August 1933.

203 AA264, *Minutes of the Scenery Preservation Board*, 5 September 1939.

noted that the building was 'falling into disrepair'.[204] This time action was taken. The gaol was handed over to the SPB by the Police Department and gazetted as a scenic reserve on 18 December, the first major site outside the Tasman Peninsula to achieve this distinction.

Although the Scenery Preservation Board had been able to do little to protect Tasmania's historic heritage before 1945, it was well aware that all over the state historically significant buildings were being lost or falling into disrepair. With the expectation of a considerable increase in its post-war funding base, the Board set about devising a strategy which would allow it to commence the enormous statewide task before it in a logical and orderly way. However, even after the war, the demands of Port Arthur and the dilemmas it posed dominated the Board's work in the historical area, and, as in the past, limited what it was able to undertake elsewhere.

5.5.2 Movable heritage

It was not only the state's fixed heritage which was endangered. Moveable relics were also rapidly disappearing. As a visitor in 1935 observed:

> Today official documents and relics of the prison are scattered all over the island. Even bricks made by the convicts are now proudly displayed to the visitor by some people as cherished possessions. Nearly everywhere I went such souvenirs were brought out for inspection.[205]

Aboriginal artefacts were equally vulnerable. By 1944, Barrett believed nearly all the middens in the northwest to 'have been well combed-over by collectors'.[206] In the absence of any controlling legislation, there was nothing to prevent either implements or skeletal material from being shipped out of the state. Disposal of the former appears to have been most casual. Porter was made a gift of a flint knife which he took back to Wales with him,[207] and when Barrett took advantage of Howard Amos' offer to 'help himself' from a box full of artefacts he was urged to take more than the 'twenty nice specimens' that he had chosen.[208] Barrett presumably took these back to Victoria.

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204 AA264, *Minutes of the Scenery Preservation Board*, 1 June 1945.

205 BARBOR, 1935; *Memories of the Apple Isle*; Journal Print, Traralgon, Victoria, unnumbered pages.

206 BARRETT, *op. cit.*, 74.

207 PORTER, *op. cit.*, 150.

208 BARRETT, *op. cit.*, 131.

Unlike the casually proffered artefacts, Tasmanian skeletal material was worth a considerable amount of money. In 1932, Mr J Wunderley of the University of Melbourne School of Anatomy believed that if the Tasmanian Museum's collection of Aboriginal bones were auctioned in New York, it would fetch between £5,000 and £10,000, or even more, especially if Truganini's skeleton were included.[209] A great deal of skeletal material left the state, much of it finding its way to European museums, where its presence became the subject of well-publicised controversies in the 1980s.

The official repositories for the state's relics, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, were the Tasmanian Museum and the Queen Victoria Museum. Acquisitions of the Beattie collections had put great strains on space in each institution. In 1936, proposals were considered to provide the former with additional space to make it 'possible to undertake further development of [its] historical side'. But, after costing, the project was not proceeded with, and the overcrowding became worse. When the Shiplovers' Society offered a collection of whaling materials, models and historical documents, the Museum was obliged to refuse it. Other collections of 'valuable ethnographical and historical material' were held in storage, where it was felt they would deteriorate. There was also nowhere for staff to work.[210]

With this in mind, a Parliamentary Committee in 1939 recommended a modest extension costed at £8,500. The Hobart City Council also offered £2,000 towards the additions.[211] The following year, when the proposed development was scrutinised more closely, it was discovered that the cost had been underestimated. Nevertheless, the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works refused to cut corners and despite wartime stringencies approved the increase by a five to one majority.[212]

The Queen Victoria Museum was also overcrowded because of its acquisition of the Beattie collection. Nevertheless, it opened another exhibit in 1937 that was indicative of its continued policy of innovation. This was the Chinese joss house, which had been obtained from the northeast of Tasmania in 1935. There had been a large Chinese community in this tin mining area during the final decades of the nineteenth century. They had to endure widespread prejudice, a series of public

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209 MERCURY, 14 January 1932.

210 JPP 1936/32.

211 JPP1939/26.

212 JPP 1940/22, *Proposed Additions to the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery – Further Consideration.*

meetings directed against them,[213] a discriminatory £20 poll tax[214] and several murders.[215] Following the downturn in the mining industry, many remained in the area as market gardeners. The acquisition of the joss house and its transfer was carried out with the active support of the Chinese community. Its cleaning, restoration and re-assembly took eighteen months to complete. The task was carried out voluntarily by a Mr and Mrs Manchester and Mr J Chung Gon Jr. It was officially opened on 1 July 1937 by the Mayor of Launceston.[216]

Legislation to protect movable items of Tasmania's heritage was only enacted in respect of documents, which, in the 1930s, were coming to assume a high cash value. Official records had been collected in Tasmania since at least as early as 1870, when C E Walch made the mistake of lending his collection to Marcus Clarke, who took it back with him Melbourne, where it was later auctioned off.[217] Much material was also casually or deliberately destroyed.[218] As its cash value became apparent, attitudes towards it changed. When J B Woollnough found two cells stacked with records at the Model Prison, he didn't realise their worth and gave a number away to tourists and a portion to Beattie. The remainder were inherited by Woollnough's daughter, who, setting aside her feelings about 'pandering to a morbid taste', sold them to Radcliffe in the late 1920s.[219]

Successive Tasmanian governments displayed a lack of concern about the trade in official records. According to Peter Biskup, it was Morris Miller, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Tasmania between 1933 and 1945, who precipitated a change of attitude. Miller, a renowned literary historian, had in the course of his work 'became increasingly appalled at the unconcern with which both the citizens and the rulers

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213 IRELAND, M, 1914; *Pioneering on the North-East Coast and West Coast of Tasmania 1876-1913*; Examiner, Launceston, 62. Ireland himself lectured at several anti-Chinese meetings. He stated matter-of-factly: 'I would like it to be understood that I have no personal grievances against the Chinaman; it is only a race distinction. The white and the brown can never mix, any more than oil and water can.'

214 The Act which included this was among the first pieces of legislation passed by the federal Parliament of Australia.

215 HAYWOOD, 1885b, *op. cit.*, 84. (See page 55 n50 above.)

216 Queen Victoria Museum Annual Reports, 1934/35, 7 November 1935 and 1937/38, 5 December 1938.

217 MERCURY, 15 May 1930. Walch was apparently so upset by this incident that he gave up collecting early Tasmanian history.

218 Numerous examples exist. For instance, in 1908 the police court at Campbell Town was knocked down and its records destroyed (BRITISH AUSTRALASIAN, 17 December 1908). The destruction of records by Lyons in 1914 has already been noted (see page 192).

219 MERCURY, 19 May 1939; letter to the editor from W Radcliffe.

of his adopted state treated their cultural heritage'.[220] In 1939, he requested the government to invite to Tasmania, Melbourne University's Professor of History, R M Crawford, to report upon the situation. The request came at an opportune time, for the government had shown the previous year a degree of concern over the safeguarding of historical records.

The impetus for this had come from the northern branch of the Tasmanian Society, which wrote to Davies, Minister for Lands, asking that care be taken of historical documents in the Court House at Stanley, a town continuously occupied since its founding in 1826 and sharing with Macquarie Harbour the distinction of being the first important settlement in the western half of Tasmania. Davies wrote back saying that he was very anxious to retain historical documents, and put the Scenery Preservation Board onto the job, instructing it to write to all of the older municipal districts. Pitt, the Chair of the Board, wrote the required letters and ascertained that in fact very few documents had survived, but that those which remained would be looked after. The councils were thanked for their replies and there the matter seemed to rest.[221]

Given the government's interest, but inability to do much other than ask questions, it is perhaps no surprise that Morris Miller's request was granted in the belief that it might lead to the development of an effective policy. Professor Crawford visited Tasmania and was struck with the need for urgent action to preserve historical materials from destruction.[222] He presented his report to Parliament in February 1940. It led, three years later, to the introduction of a Public Records Bill, designed to protect and preserve all Tasmanian records of national and historical importance, including those in private hands. The suggestion that it would allow for compulsory acquisition of the latter without compensation caused some disquiet among the opposition, Mr Ockerby MHA describing it as 'grab, grab, grab all the

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220 BISKUP, *op. cit.*

221 AA577/6, *Correspondence of the Scenery Preservation Board: Historical*: Tasmanian Society Northern Branch to Minister for Lands, 26 April 1938.

222 'The impression I had gained at Port Arthur of the imminent danger of further destruction was strengthened by two accidental discoveries. The first was the discovery of a large number of early records of the Derwent Bank in an old disused mill attached to a private house. The second discovery was the threatened destruction of the records at the Court House, Richmond. These papers, important and unimportant, had accumulated during a period of 115 years. Such accidental discoveries are an insufficient guarantee of the preservation of important records, and the narrow escape of the Richmond records must make clear the necessity of deliberate and planned action towards this general end.' (Professor Crawford, quoted in the MERCURY, 2 March 1940.)

time'.[223] The government argued that if records were official documents, they properly belonged to the state. Nevertheless, provision for compensation was written into the Bill, which was passed with the general support of the house as the *Public Records Act 1943*.[224]

The Act allowed for the creation of a public records office and the appointment of an archives officer and staff. It prohibited anyone in possession of official records from selling or destroying them without first informing the archives officer, who was empowered to acquire them if that was thought fit. Additionally, anyone believed to be holding records could be required to surrender them upon request.

One stated purpose of the legislation was 'to encourage tourist interest in relics of the early days'.[225] It became, alongside the *Scenery Preservation Act 1915*, one of the legislative cornerstones of the preservation of Tasmania's cultural heritage. Yet some time elapsed before its full implementation. The archivist appointed in 1943 was untrained and part-time. Not until 1949 was the position appropriately filled, and a proper – albeit under-funded – attempt made at the work of assembling and classifying the written records of Tasmania's past.

5.6 SUMMARY

Although the 50,000 League placed the development of the tourist traffic to Launceston high on its agenda, its promotion of the pioneer past was not carried out primarily for the purpose of attracting tourists. The grand Pioneer Celebration was held in April, outside the normal tourist season. Its main purpose, we may assume, was the one Mayor von Bibra stated: 'to bring home to the present generation a full appreciation of the achievements of the pioneers'. The avenue of trees proposed for the Launceston/Hobart road was a project in part justified because theoretically it would greatly increase the attractiveness of Tasmania to tourists, but in this case also the project would appear to have been conceived mainly for the benefit of Tasmanians.

The Tasmanian Society also carried out its work in the first place for Tasmanians; its leaders' intention was to inculcate in their fellow islanders a sense of pride in place. Although Emmett necessarily pointed out the benefits he believed the society's work would bring to the tourist trade, there is little evidence in the public

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223 MERCURY, 8 April 1943, p6.

224 7 Georgii VI No 2.

225 BISKUP, *op. cit.*, 52.

pronouncements of Rait or the society's other leaders that it was primarily intended to achieve this. Nevertheless, the erection of monuments and the marking of certain places with commemorative plaques helped to imbue Tasmania with a sense of "having a past", which no doubt contributed to its attractiveness to many tourists.[226]

In terms of Lowenthal's past-related benefits, the pioneer past provided Tasmanians with 'reaffirmation and validation'. It may be compared with the Americans' viewing of the founding fathers in the 1930s 'with renewed respect, shoring up battered self-esteem by identifying with a successful past'.[227] By contrast, though, the Tasmanians were in the process of emerging from hard times when the pioneer movement was at its height. The harking back involved did not worsen 'a climate of decline', as Hewison contends the current British heritage industry does. In many areas of Britain today, he demonstrates, "heritage" attractions have replaced once vital industries. In Tasmania during the late 1930s, on the other hand, celebrations of pioneers were set alongside celebration of the present. Nowhere is this better demonstrated than in *Tasmania, Jewel of the Commonwealth,* which stresses the continuity between Tasmania's 'remarkable history' of achievement and the hydro-led development of the state's natural resources.

The main difference, of course, between Tasmania's pre-war pioneer movement and the recent growth of industrial theme parks in Britain is that the latter are commodities, whereas Tasmania's pioneer celebrations were not. They were intended to serve a social and psychological function by combating the inferiority complex from which Tasmania had so long suffered. Thereby, emigration might be halted and people with energy, expertise and even capital attracted to the state. It was not until after the war that the pioneer past was commodified. Then it came to serve a different purpose, and because it produced identifiable income and created identifiable jobs it attracted government subsidy. The ideologically driven pre-war pioneer movement, although smiled upon by government, received very little financial support.

The historic sites supported by the Ogilvie and pre-1945 Cosgrove governments were those which produced or were likely to produce an identifiable return, Port Arthur and the Richmond Gaol – although the commodification of the latter did not take place until after the war. Even sites of widely acknowledged cultural

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226 The Tasman Monument at Dunalley quickly attracted considerable interest from tourists (BARRETT, *op. cit.*, 178).

227 LOWENTHAL, *op. cit.*, 41.

significance and touristic appeal such as Risdon, the Lady Franklin Museum and the Shot Tower were neglected because it seemed unlikely that they would produce a return commensurate with the outlay they demanded.

The government did not deem the state's cultural heritage worthy of investment in its own right. Even the highly subsidised Port Arthur was not treated as part of Tasmania's heritage. Little thought was put into interpretation of the site, which was treated much as the island's natural resources had traditionally been treated – it was mined for what could be taken from it, and subject to minimal conservation. Nevertheless, such was its value as a tourist attraction that it helped overcome the resistance of those who had long opposed the exploitation of the convict past, the *volte face* of the *Mercury* being the most striking demonstration of this.

Port Arthur was palatable partly because of its aesthetic appeal. It has already been suggested that it was the almost universal approval of the ruined Church as an object of beauty which rendered acceptable the conservation of the rest of the site. Had there been no Church, it is less likely that arguments favouring restoration of the other buildings would have been successful. It is perhaps not surprising, therefore, that in 1944, when a crisis forced the hand of government, that the Minister responsible for Port Arthur, Edward Brooker, wished to spend the considerable sum of money which conservation demanded on a scheme the main thrust of which was the site's beautification. Less important than the historical significance of the buildings was that the visitors should have an unrestricted view. That the Penitentiary would be a casualty of Brooker's scheme did not trouble him at all.

The effect of McGowan's visit to the site was exactly parallel to the effect of Fowler's visit in 1913. Both men were paid employees of government, both succeeded in overturning a ministerial decision and both prolonged the survival of the Penitentiary. McGowan, in fact, did not respond directly to the Minister but *via* two committees, the Port Arthur and Eaglehawk Neck Board and the Scenery Preservation Board. It is not surprising that the first of these responded to Brooker's original plan in the way it did; committees dominated by public servants rarely contradict their ministers. What is surprising is that this committee was persuaded by McGowan's plan to perform such a complete about turn. It can only be assumed that it, or the majority of its members, was persuaded mainly by the need to buy the town of Port Arthur if it were to be developed properly. Why it was also accepted that the Penitentiary should survive is unclear. Perhaps, the committee simply concurred with McGowan that 'it was one of the most outstanding features of Port Arthur'. It is possible also that its members were aware that this huge building was of considerable cultural significance, just as state parliamentarians

were beginning to be persuaded that the state's official records were part of Tasmania's heritage, and thus deserved protection.

The publication and official endorsement of *Shadow over Tasmania*, on the other hand, owed more to the acknowledgment of Port Arthur's importance as a tourist attraction than to its acceptance as part of the state's heritage. If the convict past had not been commodified through the agency of Port Arthur we may assume that the book would probably not have been written and, if it had, would certainly not have achieved its celebrity. It was no doubt written partly with the tourist market in mind by one who resented the popularly broadcast view of Tasmania as "the convict isle". It was also written for Tasmanians, in Plumb's terms, to legitimise the authority and status of the rulers: for by rehabilitating the very scheme which Marcus Clarke and indeed most other commentators had described as a 'frightful blunder', Smith was effectively telling Tasmanians that they need not be ashamed of themselves or their rulers, past or present.

Shadow over Tasmania may be likened to a hypothetical book published in post World War II Germany, its purpose being to exonerate the leaders of the Third Reich and to white-wash the system they perpetrated. Such a book might well have helped those Germans who believed it to feel better about themselves, but clearly it would not have assisted the nation as a whole to achieve a mature understanding of either its past or its present. No more could *Shadow over Tasmania* assist Tasmanians in this regard. Yet the book set the tone for interpretation of the state's convict past for several decades. In many ways, it usurped the position previously held by *His Natural Life*. Slight as it is, it demands to be taken seriously.

The new "white washed" interpretation of the convict past and the commodification of the pioneer past are the two features which dominated the rapid development of historical tourism within Tasmania in the decades following the Second World War.

CHAPTER 6: MUDDLING ON, 1946 TO 1959

6.1 TOURISM: A NEGLECTED INDUSTRY

The social and political development of Tasmania followed a single clear direction from 1946 until 1969. Cosgrove continued his record nineteen year premiership until 1959, when ill-health forced him to retire. Eric Reece then assumed the premiership, and Labor remained in power until 1969. Under both the Cosgrove and Reece Ministries, the hydro-industrialisation of Tasmania was stepped up.

Throughout most of the period in question, Tasmania shared in the affluence enjoyed by Australia as a whole. This was reflected in a population boom caused partly by an influx of immigrants, many of whom obtained work on HEC dam construction sites. Indeed, during the seven years from 1947, Tasmania's population increased by twenty per cent, faster than Australia's average rate of growth.[1]

The main emphasis of government in the fifteen years following the war's end was to keep ahead of this trend. The growing population required jobs, houses, schools, power and roads for their rapidly increasing number of cars. Under the circumstances, tourism was neglected.[2] The Department of Tourism's net expenditure did not exceed £40,000 until 1950, and its small staff was frequently called upon to work long hours of overtime in cramped and inadequate conditions.[3]

In spite of the lack of government support, post-war tourism to Tasmania grew annually at an impressive rate necessitating the re-opening of Departmental offices in Brisbane, Adelaide, Burnie and Devonport. In the 1946-47 season the Department's gross receipts were £363,132, an increase of 68 per cent above the previous record set in 1938-39. This moved the Director of Tourism to write in his annual report that when 'accommodation and transport problems have been solved, this valuable industry will develop into the State's premier revenue producer'.[4]

The earlier problem, the lack of suitable tourist accommodation, especially at peak periods, continued to dog the industry until the mid-1950s. Indeed, in the

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1 ROBSON, 1991, *op. cit.*, 529.

2 'In [the] relatively prosperous post-war years there appeared to be no special urgency about the promotion of the tourist traffic.' (MOSLEY, *op. cit.*, 50.) In fact, the pre-war Tourist Bureau was re-organised in 1945 to handle the additional responsibility of migration to Tasmania, and renamed the Tourist and Immigration Department.

3 JPP 1948/29.

4 JPP 1947/36.

immediate post-war years, the excess of demand for tours to Tasmania over the availability of accommodation was used by the Department to justify the lack of need for an intensive publicity campaign.[5] The second problem, transport to Tasmania, was hampered by Bass Strait shipping, which was bedevilled with disruptions and which dropped off markedly after Easter each year.[6] In fact, arrivals to Tasmania by sea decreased annually until 1955-56 when they totalled only 18,973 compared with 57,249 in 1938-39.[7] However, this decline was vastly compensated for by the increase in air traffic. Both Trans Australia Airlines and Australian National Airways commenced services to the state in 1946-47. During that year, there were 55,000 arrivals by air; this number had more than doubled by 1950-51 and reached 118,938 by 1955-56.

Although no means was available to differentiate tourists arriving in Tasmania from other travellers, in the 1952 Departmental Report 'a very liberal estimate' put the figure for Tasmanian travellers at 30,000 and for arriving migrants at 4,000. The deduction of these figures from total arrivals resulted in a net figure of 106,000 tourists who were conservatively assumed to spend £40 per head. This rough calculation suggested that the annual circulation of new money in Tasmania provided by tourists was well over four million pounds,[8] a figure four times higher than the enthusiastic pre-war estimate.

Yet a limit to this positive trend could be discerned. By the late 1950s most Australian families owned a car, and preferred to make use of it when taking annual holidays. Tasmania's tourist trade, which depended almost entirely upon interstate tourists prepared to use public transport, was perceived to be disadvantaged by this.[9] Tasmania's public transport system was also on the decline. The rail service lost £962,000 in 1952 and over a million pounds in each of the next two years. Branch lines such as the Strahan-Zeehan line were closed down.[10]

For tourists wishing to be driven around the state, there were two main options, tours in ten-seater land-rovers provided by the Ansett-Pioneer organisation and those provided by the Tourist Department's own fleet of 112 five-seater sedan

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5 JPP 1948/29.

6 JPP 1947/36.

7 JPP 1956/43.

8 JPP 1952/37.

9 JPP 1958/51.

10 ROBSON, 1991, *op. cit.*, 509.

cars.[11] A number of self-drive hire car companies were set up throughout the state, and a few visitors managed to transport cars to Tasmania by air or aboard the *Taroona*, which sailed between Melbourne and the island's northern ports.[12] Passengers' cars, however, were frequently either not loaded or delayed as a result of disruptions to the service.[13] Both methods of car transport were also costly, as was car hire. In the 1957/58 season, when visitor numbers dropped, it was realised that unless an efficient and relatively cheap method of conveying large numbers of vehicles across Bass Strait could be devised, there was a strong likelihood that mainland tourists would turn from Tasmania to other venues.

When this problem was solved in 1959, the contribution that tourism made to the state's economy rapidly became much greater, and the industry was taken more seriously. Until this time, not only was promotion neglected by government, so was the development of attractions, particularly historic attractions. Despite the zeal with which a few individuals argued for preservation of the state's historic structures as tourist attractions, the pace of development ensured that the few gains of the period were far outweighed by losses.

6.2 'A CRUMBLING HERITAGE'

After 1945, the destruction of stone buildings throughout Tasmania accelerated. The censuses of 1947, 1954 and 1961 show the number of buildings with stone outer walls declining from 1,768 to 1,555 to 1,335 respectively.[14] In the central business district of Hobart, sharp rate increases encouraged owners to replace existing two- and three-story homes with high-rise buildings in order to maximise the return on their land. In the country, as some of the large estates broke up, so the houses fell into disrepair.[15]

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11 Both sets of tours were commenced in 1946, the latter carrying 1,075 tourists in 1947-48, its first full year of operation (JPP 1948/29). A typical 9-day Pioneer tour is described in BROGDEN, S, 1948; *Tasmanian Journey*; Morris & Walker, Melbourne.

12 During the 1957-58 season, 3,565 private cars were conveyed to Tasmania by the latter means (JPP 1959/42).

13 JPP 1954/44.

14 COMMONWEALTH BUREAU OF CENSUS AND STATISTICS, *Census of Commonwealth of Australia, 30 June 1947*, Volume III, Part XXV, 1906, *Census of Commonwealth of Australia, 30 June 1954*, Volume VI, Part III, 12-14 and *Census of Commonwealth of Australia, 30 June 1961*, Volume VI, Part III, 6-7.

15 MOSLEY, *op. cit.*, 317.

Not all were oblivious to what was being lost. The wealth of Tasmania's architectural heritage had been widely renowned for many years. The artist, Hardy Wilson, did much to promote an appreciation of it in 1924 with his book, *Old Colonial Architecture in New South Wales and Tasmania*. This fine volume of fifty drawings was published in a limited edition of only 1,000 copies, yet its influence was considerable. Next to be published were two books dealing specifically with Hobart's old buildings. These were Ford's *Old Landmarks ... Hobart Town* and Rait's guide book, *Centenary of the City of Hobart*, both referred to above.[16] Barrett's 1944 *Isle of Mountains* devoted many pages to its author's passion for the island's venerable buildings, and in 1946 Barrett followed up this work with *Heritage of Stone*, which contained photographs and descriptions of 23 notable Tasmanian buildings. In his foreword, Barrett observed that many buildings were 'in the shadow of Doom'. He continued:

> They may be saved. The present Government has shown a disposition to intervene with a strong hand. In the Government we place our trust, for the Government alone can acquire authority over private as well as public property. Will it appoint a committee of experts to decide which buildings, both public and private, are worthy of preservation as "National Monuments"? This is our hope; that for such buildings, the Government will assume guardianship.[17]

Shortly after this book appeared, it was quoted from in a strongly worded *Examiner* editorial entitled "A Crumbling Heritage". It stated that:

> [i]nformed public opinion would strongly support – should, indeed, demand – the spending of substantial sums of Government money for the preservation of old buildings which give such delight to discerning visitors, but which unhappily are so little appreciated by most Tasmanians. There are owners who are looking after these precious heritages, but many are not. In the latter cases, government action is required before it is too late.[18]

The government did indeed respond up to a point, when urged by the Scenery Preservation Board. The SPB itself had been requested by the Director of Tourism to obtain from the Royal Society and the Tasmanian Society lists of buildings deemed worthy of preservation. Such lists were prepared, unsystematically and omitting many notable houses, but they represented the first attempt at an inventory of the state's built and increasingly vulnerable heritage.[19] They were considered by the SPB in May 1946 at the only meeting of its historical sub-

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16 See page 162 n42 and 244 n168 above.

17 BARRETT, C L, 1949; *Heritage of Stone*; Melbourne, 9.

18 EXAMINER, 23 October 1946, p6.

19 AA494/103 – 453/1/45, *Historic Buildings*.

committee. Recommendations were simply that certain specific sites and structures should be considered for acquisition and preservation and that:

> a property embodying the best features of early colonial architecture be acquired, one near Hobart, one near Launceston, and furnished in the period style and a charge made for admission.[20]

The full Board endorsed the sub-committee's recommendations and presented them to the Minister who shortly announced that cabinet had decided to grant the SPB £20,000 for the purchase of historic buildings.[21] The acquisition and development of Entally House as a major tourist attraction, which this money made possible, was the Scenery Preservation Board's major post-war initiative in historical conservation. That and the continued demands of Port Arthur gave the Board little opportunity or resources to do much else to preserve the state's built heritage.

6.3 THE SCENERY PRESERVATION BOARD AND PORT ARTHUR

6.3.1 Preservation

Even in post-war Tasmania, the preservation of the Port Arthur ruins was not universally supported. The Cosgrove government's decision to adopt the McGowan plan by buying up the whole town at an estimated cost of £21,000 provoked a degree of criticism both in the letter columns of the *Mercury*[22] and in the Legislative Council. Items in Public Works Execution Bills for development and for resumption of properties were attacked in the upper house in 1947 and 1949, but on both occasions it was agreed to provide the money.[23] In 1950, the RSL condemned spending money on Port Arthur when the state's road were in need of maintenance. The prison, it was said, 'should have been dumped in the sea'.[24]

However, it was widely accepted that Port Arthur was the state's most successful tourist attraction. The SPB held in 1959 that 90 per cent of tourists from the

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20 AA264, *Minutes of the Scenery Preservation Board*, 14 March 1947, 19 May 1946 and Historical Sub-Committee meeting, 3 May 1946.

21 *Ibid.*, 14 March 1947.

22 MERCURY, 2 April 1947, p4. The view expressed was based on the timeworn, 'Let the dead bury their dead'.

23 MERCURY, 12 November 1947, p5 and 8 April 1949, p5. Mr Procter MLC thought Port Arthur represented 'a page of history which could well be closed and kept for ever from the public'.

24 MERCURY, 5 June 1950.

mainland visited the settlement.[25] Over the next five years, there were thought to have been half a million visitors to the site, although only 143,000 of these had paid guide fees.[26]

While access to the site remained free, the only reliable indication of visitation was that provided by the numbers of those participating in guided tours. Such figures of course fall far short of total visitation, but they indicate effectively the rate at which visitation was increasing over time. In 1944-45, only 2,631 visitors paid for tours.[27] The following year, the number had increased to 6,687.[28] The next year saw a doubling to 13,564.[29] Then in 1947-48, there was a further large increase to 20,694,[30] For the next few years, numbers stabilised between 22,000 and 23,000, even showing a slight drop when guide fees were raised in 1952.[31] Thereafter, the rate of increase continued modestly, 26,135 tours being taken in 1960-61[32].

The money raised from guide fees and from rents on the resumed properties provided the SPB with its only sources of revenue from Port Arthur. Resumption of privately-owned buildings within the Port Arthur site was 'practically completed after long and often unpleasant negotiation' by July 1949.[33] In 1952, rental income was approximately £1,200, and it may be assumed that this figure remained fairly static.[34] Income from guide fees rose from a paltry £197 in 1944-45 to £1,679 in 1950-51. The following year, the fee was raised from 1/6d to 2/- for adults, and, although visitation dropped slightly, income rose to £2,226.[35] Guides were paid at a rate of 6d per head until 1951 when this commission was raised to 9d. The total

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25 SYDNEY MORNING HERALD, 23 May 1959, p12.

26 MERCURY, 9 April 1964, p24.

27 AA610, *General Correspondence, Port Arthur Scenic Reserves Board: Superintendent and Rangers*, July 1946.

28 *Ibid.*

29 AA610, *General Correspondence, Port Arthur Scenic Reserves Board*, annual report of the Port Arthur and Eaglehawk Neck Reserve Board.

30 AA264, *Minutes of the Scenery Preservation Board*, 18 April 1952.

31 *Ibid.*, 18 July 1952.

32 *Ibid.*, 7 July 1961.

33 AA610, *General Correspondence, Port Arthur Scenic Reserves Board: Port Arthur Works*, report by Sharland, 6 July 1949.

34 AA264, *Minutes of the Scenery Preservation Board*, 18 April 1952, gives a figure of £926 for rental income for the nine months until 31 March 1952, or approximately £100 per month. No other indication of rental income has come to light.

35 AA610, *General Correspondence, Port Arthur Scenic Reserves Board: Superintendent and Rangers*, July 1946 and AA 264, *Minutes of the Scenery Preservation Board*, 18 April 1952 and 18 July 1952.

income from rents and visitation fees minus guides' commission would therefore have been in the vicinity of £2,500-£3,000 throughout the 1950s.[36] Between 1945 and 1950, it would have been substantially lower.

From this meagre income, the Scenery Preservation Board had to develop and manage a unique historic town. To complicate matters further, there was in the immediate post-war years the added problem of so much work being available in Hobart that labour could not be tempted to Port Arthur.[37] In spite of these difficulties, the Board announced bold plans for the town's future. Shops would be removed from the historic site and a new residential area constructed.[38] There were also many repairs to be effected, the whole area required clearing and landscaping, and the construction of a large visitors' 'chalet' was planned.

In 1947, Michael Sharland was appointed to the newly created position of Superintendent of Reserves. On his shoulders fell the main responsibility for all this work. In December 1947, after he had only been seven months in his job, he wrote to the SPB that local problems were 'arising and requir[ing] constant attention'.[39] He felt it obvious that the town could not be managed efficiently from an office in Hobart. He advised:

> Delay and confusion will be unavoidable unless this Government-owned town is managed by a local organisation. This will lead to adverse criticism of the Board and also reflect upon the Board's officer who is unable to concentrate upon Port Arthur affairs.

He advised the appointment of an administrator, responsible to the Port Arthur Scenic Reserves Board, and of a work-gang of three responsible to the administrator. The appointments were made, but no local organisation was created. By July 1949, little physical work had been done apart from repairs to the newly acquired houses, some restoration work on the Commandant's House, the restoration of a clock to the Town Hall, grading of the recreation ground and (somewhat incongruously) the building of tennis courts. Sharland, who could not

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36 There was a further rise of fees (to 2/6 per adult) and commission (to 1/6 per guide) in 1956 (AA264, *Minutes of the Scenery Preservation Board*, 17 August 1956). Given roughly 24,000 inspections per year at this time, net income from guided tours would have been around £1,200. Total annual income would therefore have remained at approximately £2,500.

37 AA610, *General Correspondence, Port Arthur Scenic Reserves Board: Church*: Round to Secretary, Port Arthur Board, 21 May 1946.

38 MERCURY, 2 July 1947, p4.

39 AA610, *General Correspondence, Port Arthur Scenic Reserves Board:* Sharland to Chair, SPB, 8 December 1947.

manage to visit Port Arthur more frequently than once per fortnight,[40] admitted that progress had not been 'as rapid as desired'.[41] Six months later, citing 'administration difficulties', he advocated the abolition of the Port Arthur Scenic Reserves Board. The SPB accepted this advice, and the sub-board was not reappointed after 30 June 1950.

But further setbacks followed. A stonemason specially brought out from England in May 1950 was sacked less than a year later because of the excessively slow speed at which he worked.[42] And in 1952, when the government cut the SPB's budget by 10 per cent over the financial year, Sharland wrote to the overseer of the Port Arthur work gang asking him to spare whom he could.[43]

The first major work of post-war restoration was the rebuilding of the west wall of the Church, carried out for a cost of £5,365 in 1955.[44] By 1958, the Commandant's House had been repainted and some minor repairs carried out. Smith O'Brien's Cottage had been re-shingled and restored externally, while the interior of the building had been converted to a Youth Hostel.[45] A demolished wall of the Model Prison was rebuilt over its old foundations.[46] The Town Hall tower was refaced, minor works were carried out on Tower Cottage and the Powder Magazine, and the 'beautification' of the grounds continued. Additionally, the SPB, in its role of landlord, had spent hundreds of pounds on repairing the tenanted houses it had acquired, and on wiring them when electricity was made available in the Peninsula in 1951.[47]

In spite of this work, a Launceston visitor in 1958 complained:

> The 'ruins' are in a disgraceful state, in many cases inaccessible, often unsafe. The tourist is not encouraged to look at them closely.

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40 AA264, *Minutes of the Scenery Preservation Board*, 8 July 1949.

41 AA610, *General Correspondence, Port Arthur Scenic Reserves Board: Port Arthur Works*, report by Sharland, 6 July 1949.

42 AA610, *General Correspondence, Port Arthur Scenic Reserves Board*: Secretary to Secretary for Lands, 22 May 1950 and Acting Secretary to Parkinson, 12 March 1951.

43 *Ibid.*: Sharland to Parkinson, 21 August 1952.

44 AA264, *Minutes of the Scenery Preservation Board*, 3 May 1954 and MERCURY, 6 January 1955.

45 AA264, *Minutes of the Scenery Preservation Board*, 12 October 1950.

46 These had been discovered by excavation, and rebuilding of the wall was aided by photographs taken by the Anson brothers in the 1880s (SYDNEY MORNING HERALD, 23 May 1959, p12).

47 AA264, *Minutes of the Scenery Preservation Board*, 1 December 1950 and EXAMINER, 16 January 1958.

> No map or plan of the area is on sale, and in fact the whole atmosphere is one of "take it or leave it".[48]

This view was echoed by an American visitor, who found the site 'a disgrace to [the Tasmanian] government'.[49] Although the Chair of the SPB stoutly defended the Board's record at Port Arthur, little further work was carried out until a new advisory body, the Tasman Peninsula Board, was set up by the SPB in 1962. This allowed considerably closer focus on the problems of the site, but did not make their solution any easier.

6.3.2 Interpretation

Michael Sharland, like Emmett, favoured an interpretation of Port Arthur which played down its horrors. In this, both followed in the "whitewash" tradition popularised in 1941 by Coultman Smith. Emmett, in 1947, when defending the government's decision to buy the town and convert it into 'the greatest ... showplace in Australia', stated that '[n]o one in Tasmania need be ashamed of descent from convict transportees'. Instead, he believed that stress should be given to the reformatory aspects of Port Arthur.[50] And Sharland, in 1948, outlined his vision for the site as 'a "Garden Town" and a unique holiday centre in which natural and architectural beauty will obscure the rather sombre picture of its past'.[51] But whatever the official interpretation of Port Arthur's significance, practically it was by way of the guided tours that most visitors formed a view of the place.

Guided tours were a chronic problem. It is not surprising that the guides themselves were often far from satisfactory; their earnings from commissions amounted to less than the basic wage despite their working seven days a week and all public holidays.[52] The temptation to proceed with oversize parties and not to bother at all with small ones must have been considerable. In 1960, a party of 142 was brought to the attention of the SPB; thereafter the guides were asked to keep party size to less than 100.[53] And in 1956 guide Weston was dismissed on the spot for his casual

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48 EXAMINER, 15 January 1958; letter from J Barrett.

49 EXAMINER, 17 January 1958.

50 MERCURY, 1 May 1947, p16.

51 AA610, *General Correspondence, Port Arthur Scenic Reserves Board,* Port Arthur, draft of article written by Sharland in May 1948 for GMH House Magazine.

52 *Ibid.*: Hartram to Sharland, 16 November 1950.

53 AA610/2, *General Correspondence, Port Arthur Scenic Reserves Board: Guides*: Bessell to Chair, SPB, 18 March 1960.

attitude towards small parties. If numbers did not in his view merit a tour, he would point out the ruins without moving. This would take about two minutes. He would then often give visitors the key to the Model Prison, and allow them to wander round unaccompanied. This resulted in vandalism and on one occasion to the theft of some valuable nineteenth century framed photographs.[54]

New guides were given little help or training. Emmett prepared Weston in 1954 by giving him a 'brief statement' about the site, a copy of a talk he had given on the local radio station, booklets by Beattie and Evenden, *Shadow over Tasmania* and Forsyth's *Governor Arthur's Convict System.*[55] Five years later, the training method had not changed:

> The official guides [are] supplied with the basic historic background of the penal settlement and they use their own discretion in telling the interesting story of Port Arthur. They make their talks as informative as possible, without exaggerating the story.[56]

Guides were occasionally corrected if they gave inaccurate factual information,[57] although accounts by visitors suggest that the myths of Suicide Cliff and the Point Puer underground cells were perpetuated well into the 1960s.[58] The guides evidently understood that such tales were appreciated by visitors. The sensationalist approach did not find favour with the SPB, however. In 1953, Mr Delderfield, Police Commissioner and Board member, said:

> [I]t would be appropriate if the Board took the lead in trying to remove the impression that convict administration at Port Arthur had been full of horror, and emphasised its importance as a real advance on the English prison system. They should show people that it was not an example of the depths of depravity to which men could sink.[59]

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54 AA610/2, *General Correspondence, Port Arthur Scenic Reserves Board: Guides*: Lomax to Secretary, SPB, 17 July 1956, Superintendent to Hartram, 19 July 1956 and undated report by Sharland.

55 *Ibid.*: Emmett to Ferguson, 15 July 1954.

56 *Ibid.*: Acting Secretary to State Librarian, 27 August 1959.

57 The new guide, Wenck, had his attention drawn to 'many serious inaccuracies' in 1956 (AA610/2, *General Correspondence, Port Arthur Scenic Reserves Board: Guides*: Butler to Wenck, December 1956) and guide Weldon was asked in 1958 not to state positively that Blackburn designed the Church – 'the "mystery" might in fact be more interesting' (*ibid.*: Sharland to Weldon, 13 June 1958).

58 See, for instance, BROGDEN, *op. cit.*, 23 and BEATTY, B, 1963; *Tasmania, Isle of Splendour*; Cassell Australia, Melbourne, 132.

59 AA264, *Minutes of the Scenery Preservation Board*, 10 July 1953.

Although this idea was welcomed by the Chair, a year later Delderfield still found cause to complain that the 'horror side' was being emphasised by the guides and that nothing was said 'about the system being one of the greatest advances in the world of prison management'. Mr Payne of Forestry agreed that the guides dwelt too much on the sordid side.[60]

Other serious offences in the view of the Board were inappropriate humour and references to politics. A racist "joke" incorporated into the commentaries in 1960 provoked a complaint from the Italian vice-consul.[61] And in 1949, when the guides' tendency to mention 'politics' in their commentaries was brought to the attention of government, they were instructed by the Chair of the SPB to 'keep to a description of the ruins'.[62]

After 1962, the problem of the guided tours was addressed with more vigour by the Tasman Peninsula Committee, but with no greater success. The guides were simply part of the commodity of Port Arthur. No more was required of them than to make money efficiently. Their success even in this was not notable.

6.3.3 Commodification

The commodification of Port Arthur was furthered during the post-war years by means of a variety of projects. Almost all were characterised by muddles and delays.

Drawings of a proposed £3,000 'chalet' to house tourist facilities such as tea rooms were first revealed to the public in 1947.[63] Five years later, the building was still half-finished, having been abandoned by a sequence of unsatisfactory PWD contractors. It remained in this state for so long that it was sardonically described as a 'modern ruin'. It was not completed until 1958.[64]

The Hotel Arthur, originally the Medical Officer's House, was acquired by the government in 1948 for £9,700 and leased back to its owner for £15 per week.[65] In

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60 AA264, *Minutes of the Scenery Preservation Board*, 26 June 1954.

61 *Ibid.*, 15 January 1960.

62 AA610/2, *General Correspondence, Port Arthur Scenic Reserves Board: Guides*: Secretary to Hartram, 31 May 1949.

63 MERCURY, 28 August 1947.

64 AA610, *General Correspondence, Port Arthur Scenic Reserves Board*, report by Sharland, 15 May 1958.

65 *Ibid.*, report by Sharland, October 1950.

1951 the Licensing Court ruled that it was not up to standard; it was at the time the only licensed premises on the Tasman Peninsula. The SPB spent £4,000 on the building, but the Court was still not satisfied. Further sums were spent on upgrading, but in 1956 the Board was warned that the licence would under no circumstances be extended beyond September. Plans for a new motel, estimated to cost £45,000 and situated outside the historic site, were drawn up by the SPB, which sought finance from loan funds for the construction. The government was prepared to lose money on the venture, regarding it as a 'subsidy to the tourist industry',[66] but the upper house refused the necessary finance.[67] Eventually a private individual, Mr H Groom, was found who seemed prepared to take over the existing Hotel Arthur and finance the building of a new motel. The SPB, however, were determined to specify where the motel should be located in order to preserve the integrity of the historic site. Groom shortly revealed that he was unhappy with this and various other of the Board's stipulations. There then occurred an acrimonious eighteen month stand-off.[68] At the height of the dispute, Mr B Crawford, a Liberal MHA, publicised Groom's predicament as a flagrant example of the SPB's excessively wide powers.[69]

A pertinent question which appears not to have been asked was why the SPB permitted Groom to sign the lease on the Hotel Arthur without obtaining agreement with him on every aspect of the package. Fortunately, when he did pull out of the negotiations in March 1959, the SPB only had two months to wait before a *bona fide* alternative proposal was made and quickly approved. The new hotel/motel was completed the following year, and found general favour with the Board.[70]

Further acrimony and muddle occurred in the SPB's attempts to gain control of a museum in the historic site. The building which housed the Radcliffe museum, Port Arthur's museum, was acquired by the government in 1948. It was an 'insanitary and unwholesome' shed, and not part of the original prison station.[71] On Radcliffe's

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66 JPP 1956/32; *Proposed New Hotel at Port Arthur.*

67 EXAMINER, 10 November 1956.

68 AA264, *Minutes of the Scenery Preservation Board,* 8 November 1957, 21 March 1958, 2 May 1958, 27 June 1958, 8 August 1958, 12 September 1958 and 23 January 1959.

69 MERCURY, 21 April 1959.

70 AA264, *Minutes of the Scenery Preservation Board,* 11 March 1959, 22 May 1959, 11 September 1959 and 8 April 1960.

71 AA610, *General Correspondence, Port Arthur Scenic Reserves Board: Museum*: Sharland to Chair, SPB, 18 August 1960.

death in 1943, management of the museum passed to his widow. Her museum was described by a visitor in 1958 as the 'most tragic part' of Port Arthur:

> Many relics of the settlement are in a wooden shed where they can be handled, damaged or defaced by anyone who has the price of admission. Priceless old books and documents are tossed carelessly under benches and allowed to rot.[72]

Sharland wrote to Mrs Radcliffe in 1947. He suggested that the SPB was considering the acquisition of the museum, housing it in the Commandant's House and employing her to run it. She declined the suggestion,[73] and by 1955 the establishment of a museum collection had fallen in priority to become one of Sharland's '"long-range" projects'.[74] By 1959, Mrs McGinniss (as Mrs Radcliffe had then become) was willing to auction off her collection, but the SPB was no longer inclined to purchase it. However, it was determined to demolish the sub-standard building in which it was housed. The negotiations which followed were typically confused, and resulted in the Radcliffe family setting up the museum in new premises outside the historic site, and in Mrs McGinniss attempting unsuccessfully to obtain compensation from the SPB for loss of goodwill.[75]

Other projects planned by the SPB for Port Arthur remained permanently on the deferred list. In 1956, these included the building of a scale model of the site and construction of a series of dioramas.[76] The model maker's offer was first made in 1950. The quotation of between £500 and £1,000 was too high for the Board to consider at that time. Three years later, the idea was revived. The possibility of giving the job to technical college students was explored, then dismissed as impractical. Two more professionals were approached before the idea was finally

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72 EXAMINER, 15 January 1958; letter from J Barrett.

73 AA610, *General Correspondence, Port Arthur Scenic Reserves Board: Museum*: Sharland to Radcliffe, 23 September 1947.

74 *Ibid.*, Port Arthur, report by Sharland, 2 May 1955.

75 AA264, *Minutes of the Scenery Preservation Board*, 11 September 1959, 20 November 1959, 15 January 1960 and 8 April 1960.
AA610, *General Correspondence, Port Arthur Scenic Reserves Board: Museum*: Sharland to McGinniss, 11 July 1957, McGinniss to Sharland, 16 July 1958, Sharland to McGinniss, 3 August 1959 and 23 December 1959, McGinniss to Cashion, 2 March 1960, Smith to Miles, 28 March 1960 and Sharland to Chair, SPB, 18 August 1960.
MERCURY, 9 March 1960, 14 March 1960, 18 May 1960 and 9 November 1961.

76 AA264, *Minutes of the Scenery Preservation Board*, 2 November 1956 and list of deferred works.

shelved on the grounds of cost.[77] An offer to make 12 dioramas for £1,000 was then considered, investigated and added to the deferred list.

In 1962, it was stated by the Scenery Preservation Board that 'the development of Port Arthur went ahead by leaps and bounds as a result of [Michael Sharland's] enthusiasm'.[78] There is no doubt that Sharland worked hard, and, for a variety of reasons outside his control, achieved far less than he would have liked at that historic site. He had far greater success with the development of Entally House, where he played a central role, but by 1960 even this historic attraction had not achieved all that had been hoped for it – either by the SPB or by the government.

6.4 ENTALLY NATIONAL HOUSE

Following the Cosgrove government's decision in 1946 to make £20,000 available for the purchase of historic buildings, the SPB set about locating suitable Georgian houses. Several throughout Tasmania were considered and inspected before Entally was chosen. This 21-room manor house set in 93 acres of park and farmlands was built at Hadspen, about thirteen kilometres south of Launceston, in the early 1820s. Its founder was Mary Reiby, who as a girl had worked as a servant to an English squire. In 1790, when thirteen, she was transported to New South Wales for taking his horse without permission. Later she became the colony's first business woman. Entally was built for her son, Thomas. Later descendants also lived at Entally and made their mark on Tasmania. Mary's grandson, Thomas, was ordained as an Anglican archdeacon and was briefly Premier of Tasmania. A grand-daughter married Governor Arthur's nephew, Charles, and the house remained in the Arthur family until acquired by the government.

By virtue of its connection with this essentially romantic story of a convict made good, Entally had eminent ideological as well as architectural appeal for the SPB and the Cosgrove government. Its past was not problematic as was the past of Port Arthur. Although it was built by convict labour and staffed by convict servants, in its presentation to the public these aspects of its history could be omitted. In Sharland's words, Entally would become:

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77 AA264, *Minutes of the Scenery Preservation Board*, 12 October 1950, 10 July 1953, 14 August 1953, 30 October 1953 and 22 January 1954.

78 *Ibid.*, 8 June 1962.

> a part of rural England with its allied charms ... a shrine where might be paid some homage to Tasmanian pioneers, Reiby and others, who opened up the land.[79]

The government purchased Entally for £7,500 in 1948, the transaction also being supported by the opposition.[80] Over the next two years, £9,144 was spent on renovating and furnishing eleven rooms.[81] The Premier also appealed to owners of historic objects, paintings and furniture to loan them to Entally.[82] Many such bequests and loans were made.[83]

The SPB's commercial intention with Entally was to charge visitors for admission. The government hoped that the venture would be self-supporting once up and running.[84] This was to be a tall order, for expenses included a weekly wages bill of £50/3- for the six full-time staff, who were hired some time before the official opening.[85] In preparation for this event, an honorary committee was set up to advise on furnishings, history, pictures and grounds.[86]

It was decided that Entally would be furnished to represent the development of a wealthy settler's home between 1821 and 1840. Imported English furniture between 1600 and 1820 was used for the main rooms, and some colonial cedar collected for the less important areas.[87] A history written in the style of a romantic novel was printed and priced at 1/-.[88] The grounds around the house were prepared as a picnic area for locals. No charge was to be made for their use.[89] The bulk of the estate was to be developed as a farm, which it was believed should be self-supporting if run by one man.[90]

Fees to inspect the house were set at 1/- for adults and 6d for children, and arrangements were made to serve teas. Although a 'hostess' was engaged to welcome visitors there was to be no guide as such. Rather, Entally was to be

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79 MERCURY, 29 January 1949.

80 EXAMINER, 11 January 1951.

81 EXAMINER, 8 November 1950 and MERCURY, 5 December 1950.

82 MERCURY, 18 December 1948.

83 EXAMINER, 3 July 1956.

84 EXAMINER, 3 November 1948.

85 EXAMINER, 8 November 1950.

86 MERCURY, 21 May 1949.

87 AA578/2, *Entally: Publications*, catalogue by C Craig.

88 AA578/2, *Entally: History*, undated typescript by K von Steiglitz.

89 MERCURY, 5 December 1950, p19.

90 AA264, *Minutes of the Scenery Preservation Board*, 26 September 1952.

'maintained in such a way that the visitor gains the impression that he has come upon a place left open while the owner was out for a short time'. Visitors were to be 'asked to treat it as a home, as though they were invited guests'.[91]

Entally was officially opened by the Premier, Robert Cosgrove, on 8 December 1950. Thereafter it was open from 10.30am to 5pm seven days a week.[92] In the first month, 3,000 people paid for admission, and by April 1951, 10,000 visitors had passed through the doors.[93] The SPB thought it 'a credit to everyone'.[94]

FIGURE 6.1

THE DRAWING ROOM AT ENTALLY HOUSE

But although there were 14,606 admissions to Entally in its first full year of operation,[95] about two thirds of the number that paid to see Port Arthur over the same period, Entally did not cover its costs. The result from the farm was also 'disappointing'.[96] Against the advice of staff, entry fees were increased by 50 per cent. Other schemes were explored: the house was opened at night during winter and hot suppers served, more souvenirs were sold, but takings declined and by

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91 BEATTY, *op. cit.*, 23-24.

92 EXAMINER, 5 December 1950.

93 AA264, *Minutes of the Scenery Preservation Board*, 12 January 1951 and MERCURY, 19 April 1951.

94 AA264, *Minutes of the Scenery Preservation Board*, 9 March 1951.

95 *Ibid.*,18 July 1952.

96 *Ibid.*, 26 September 1952.

June 1954, Entally was in 'serious trouble'.[97] There were also staff problems. The manager resigned, feeling his advice not to have been accepted. Numbers of visitors dropped back to 12,000 annually. Staff trouble continued, as did losses, £2,035 in 1956/57 and £1,764 the following year.[98] By the end of 1958, Entally was 'at a low ebb. Staff morale [was] low.'[99] As a result of its 'experiment with Entally', the SPB decided in 1955 against the purchase of a southern National House. An opportunity to purchase the Hobart colonial home, Runnymede, was therefore passed by.[100]

The failure of Entally to realise the expectations for it derived largely from Tasmania's failure to attract sufficient tourists to make it pay. The drop in visitation to the site at the end of the 1950s was a reflection of the drop in tourist numbers to the state. Once that problem was addressed, Entally had a chance to succeed. Until then it was a drain on the SPB's reserves and, with Port Arthur, prevented the Board from fulfilling in any significant way its function as protector of the state's built heritage.

6.5 THE SCENERY PRESERVATION BOARD – ACQUISITIONS AND ADMINISTRATION

In addition to Port Arthur and Entally, the SPB ran the old gaol at Richmond as a historic tourist attraction. This had been gazetted in 1945. It was opened to the public the following year, a pensioner having been hired to show visitors around for a remuneration of half the 1/- fee.[101] Some restoration work was carried out on the gaol over the next few years: a section was underpinned, and the building was re-roofed and decorated for a total cost of less than £1,000.[102] That appears to be the only expense it caused the Scenery Preservation Board throughout the period that it managed the site.

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97 AA264, *Minutes of the Scenery Preservation Board*, 11 January 1952, 21 March 1952, 16 May 1952, 19 February 1954 and 26 June 1954.

98 *Ibid.*, 12 September 1958.

99 *Ibid.*

100 *Ibid.*, 7 October 1955.

101 *Ibid.*, 8 February 1946 and 8 March 1946.

102 *Ibid.*, 10 June 1946, 10 October 1947 and 8 July 1949 and MERCURY 27 February 1949.

On the death of the pensioner guide in 1952, Mrs B Rait was appointed as guide, thereby becoming the first woman to occupy such a position in Tasmania. With her husband, Basil Rait, she organised a small museum and a tea room. In view of Rait's contempt for the exploitation of Tasmania's convict past,[103] it may perhaps be considered surprising that he consented to live in and profit from a convict prison older even than Port Arthur. A possible explanation may lie in the fact that the Tasmanian Society effectively ceased to function after the war, leaving Rait with no full-time job. The Richmond Gaol at least provided an income, and it appears to have functioned with an absolute minimum of fuss.

That the site was well run by the Raits is indicated by a letter to the *Examiner* written in 1958. After heated criticism of the management of Port Arthur, the writer added, 'In marked contrast to this state, the old gaol at Richmond is at least presented in a manner attractive to the visitor'.[104] Only two mentions of the site occur in the minute book of the SPB between 1953 and 1971, one authorising the printing of a souvenir gaol pass, the other agreeing to a raise of fees from 1/- to 2/- per visitor.[105] This did not occur until 1965, so it may be assumed that the SPB were satisfied with the site's low profile and modest income.

So few were the Board's resources between 1945 and 1960 that, with Port Arthur, Entally and Richmond Gaol to preserve and administer, there was for several years little hope of the acquisition of further historical sites. Moreover, under the enthusiastic leadership of Colin Pitt, the post-war Chair of the SPB, the area of scenic reserves under the Board's control (renamed National Parks in 1946) increased markedly.[106] Annual funding, however, was not allocated accordingly. In October 1946, the Chair was informed by government that the vote would be cut by £2,000.[107] The following year, the vote of £4,000 to administer 500,000 acres of reserves was regarded as insufficient and viewed by the Board 'with alarm'.[108] In 1952, the financial situation was considered 'grave'. An appropriation of £13,000 was sought, but a 10% reduction expected.[109]

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103 See page 218 above.

104 EXAMINER, 15 January 1958.

105 AA264, *Minutes of the Scenery Preservation Board*, 22 May 1959 and 6 August 1965.

106 CASTLES, *op. cit.*, 84.

107 AA264, *Minutes of the Scenery Preservation Board*, 8 October 1946.

108 *Ibid.*, 19 December 1947.

109 *Ibid.*, 18 July 1952.

Historic properties deserving of preservation were constantly brought to the Board's attention. Editorials and letters published in the *Mercury* and the *Examiner* frequently called for more to be done.[110] The theme was also taken up in two books, Clive Turnbull's *The Charm of Hobart* (1949),[111] and Michael Sharland's own *Stones of a Century* (1952). The argument frequently put to government was that Tasmania's old buildings attracted tourists, and that a thriving tourist trade was becoming increasingly necessary to the economy.[112] In general, the Cosgrove government ignored such overtures, believing that its funding of the SPB was adequate for such purposes.

But the SPB was prevented under the terms of its Act from spending money on the upkeep of buildings which it did not own. In July 1949, it attempted to circumvent this impasse by recommending that the government 'introduce legislation to provide for the expenditure of public money by way of subsidies on such terms and conditions as recommended by the SPB for the purposes of restoration and preservation of historic buildings'.[113] A month later the government replied that it was not prepared to accept this scheme.[114]

Undeterred, Sharland detailed in *Stones of a Century* a plan whereby the government would advance low interest loans to owners of historic buildings for restoration and maintenance work. It was suggested that the SPB would vet the proposals and the work. Any misapplied or unrepaid loans would result in the government having the right to exercise power of acquisition over the property in question.[115] Again this led nowhere. Still Sharland did not give up. In 1955, at an SPB meeting, he distributed copies of a report which described a scheme whereby owners of 'buildings of outstanding merit' would be provided with grants to assist them with upkeep. He proposed that the *Scenery Preservation Act* be amended to allow this.[116] The government again replied saying that no funds would be made available to private owners of historic homes.[117]

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110 EXAMINER, 5 November 1946, 14 March 1947, p2, 20 June 1950, p2 and 20 October 1958. MERCURY, 24 March 1947 and 6 March 1952.

111 TURNBULL, C, 1949; *The Charm of Hobart*; Ure Smith, Sydney.

112 'Properly maintained and publicised, old buildings could prove a tremendous tourist drawcard for Tasmania. Eighty per cent of Europe's tourist traffic is attracted by antiquities' (lecture delivered by Dr C Craig, 17 October 1958, reported in the EXAMINER, 18 October 1958).

113 AA264, *Minutes of the Scenery Preservation Board*, 8 July 1949.

114 *Ibid.*, 19 August 1949.

115 SHARLAND, M, 1952; *Stones of a Century*; Walch, Hobart, 70.

116 AA264, *Minutes of the Scenery Preservation Board*, 9 December 1955.

117 *Ibid.*, 20 January 1956.

Since the SPB could only take steps to preserve the buildings it owned, it was tempted to acquire a range of endangered historical structures. At the same time it was aware of its precarious financial position. Even where the acquisition of a structure would involve no outlay, as would be the case if it took over a building already owned by a government department, the Board was aware that upkeep would be likely to stretch its funds. This tension frequently led to a great deal of vacillation, which at times verged upon the ludicrous.

In June 1947, for instance, there was concern that Richmond Bridge was being defaced as a result of roadworks. Accordingly, the SPB passed a motion proposing that the structure be proclaimed an historic reserve under the Act. Two months later, Sharland advised that the Board might be involved in a big liability if the acquisition went ahead. The previous motion was immediately rescinded.[118]

A longer deliberation took place over the Lady Franklin Museum, which was languishing under the apathetic control of Hobart City Council. In May 1947, the council suggested that the SPB take the building over. Sharland was asked to prepare a plan, which he submitted later that month. It stated that the structure was in 'fairly good order' but would require £100 to fix up. The HCC was asked to put the building in order before the takeover. This was agreed to in August. In September, at a conference between the two bodies, the SPB decided that it could not take full responsibility for maintenance, and there the matter rested until July 1948 when the Hobart Art Society expressed an interest in the building. A lease was arranged and the Art Society commenced a tenancy which is still in force today.[119]

The wavering over Fawkner's Cottage was even more protracted. This building was owned by the Education Department. A meeting of the SPB's historical sub-committee decided in May 1947 that consideration should be given to its acquisition. In January 1949, a Melbourne architect, I G Anderson, offered to provide free of charge a plan for its restoration. He estimated that the cost of the work would be £200-£300, and the SPB decided to restore and preserve the building. In April 1949, it was resolved that the cottage should be proclaimed a reserve. In October that year the decision was taken to proceed with restoration. In December it was noted that there was difficulty in getting labour to carry out the work. Not until January 1951 was the matter raised again. A further study had concluded that a full rebuild of the cottage was necessary. This would cost £660.

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118 AA264, *Minutes of the Scenery Preservation Board*, 2 May 1947 and 11 July 1947.

119 *Ibid.*, 2 May 1947, 22 May 1947, 8 August 1947 and 12 September 1947.

The Chair said that he did not favour rebuilding as the historic significance of the building would then be lost. The Board might as well let it fall down and erect a monument. It was then resolved to let it fall down and do just that.

Happily, the two lengthiest such deliberations both led ultimately to the acquisition and preservation of the structures in question, the Shot Tower at Taroona and the Callington Mill at Oatlands, both notable tourist attractions. The former was first offered to the SPB in November 1945, the owner asking £2,500 for the tower and three buildings. However, the complex was valued at only £500, and the Chair spoke to the Minister advising resumption under the *Lands Resumption Act.* Cabinet was not disposed to purchase on grounds of the probable cost. The Board was asked if it would be satisfied if a suitable individual purchased it, preserved it and made it available. In May 1946, the tower was indeed bought and opened for public inspections. A decade later, the SPB was informed that the government was interested in purchasing the building, and in July 1956 it was acquired and proclaimed a historic reserve. The price paid for it was £10,500,[120] five times what it could have been obtained for a decade previously. Almost £4,000 was spent on 'renovations' and 'improvements' to the tower shortly after it was purchased, whereupon it was leased to a private operator at £7/10/- per week.[121]

The longest deliberations over the purchase of a building took place in respect of Callington Mill. It was first decided that this should be acquired and completely restored at the SPB's historic sub-committee meeting in May 1946. In January 1948, it was confirmed that the Mill would be acquired after a report on it had been received. It then fell from the agenda until 1955, when Oatlands Council suggested that the SPB purchase it. Sharland was directed to interview the owner. The Mill was next mentioned in January 1959 when it was put on the market for £1,500. The next mention was in October 1960 when it was again for sale, the asking price having risen to £1,800. Sharland recommended purchase, and in February 1961, the Board passed his recommendation on to government. In September the purchase was approved, but it was noted that no funds were available with which to carry it out.

The following February the government was advised to negotiate with the owner on the basis of a £500 valuation. In March 1963, the owner was asked to hold the building for the SPB, the Chair negotiated and by June a purchase price of £1,000 had been approved. Before any money changed hands, the Board sought advice on

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120 AA264, *Minutes of the Scenery Preservation Board*, 30 November 1945, 8 March 1946, 19 May 1946, 14 June 1946, 11 May 1956 and 6 July 1956.

121 *Ibid.*, 13 December 1957, 21 March 1958 and 8 August 1958.

the preservation of windmills, a subject on which it lacked expertise. Not until July 1964, eighteen years after the original recommendation, was the transaction completed and the Mill proclaimed a historic reserve.[122]

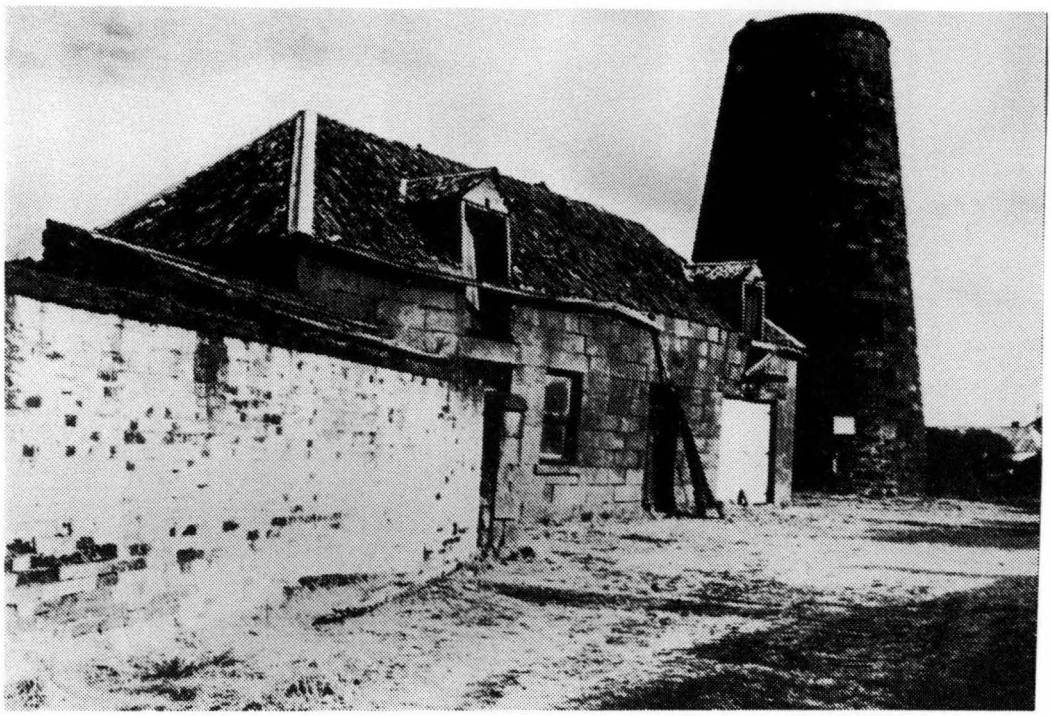

FIGURE 6.2

CALLINGTON MILL

There can be no doubt that the excruciating processes described above resulted not solely from the Board's chronic shortage of funds but also from the extremely cumbersome nature of the organisation's structure, which remained virtually unchanged throughout its existence. It was in essence an honorary board comprising the heads of various government departments, their numbers augmented by others considered to have useful specialist knowledge. It has been described by Castles as 'little more than an administrative appendage' of the Lands Department.[123]

All executive action was theoretically dependent upon decisions taken by the Board which met monthly, the decisions themselves frequently requiring cabinet ratification. Moreover, the increasingly complex administration of the state's scenic and historic reserves was also in some measure dependent upon decisions taken by several subsidiary boards. These had been reconstituted in May 1947, one month

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122 AA264, *Minutes of the Scenery Preservation Board*, 3 May 1946, 23 January 1948, 15 January 1955, 23 January 1959, 11 March 1959, 11 October 1960, 3 February 1961, 1 September 1961, 3 November 1961, 2 February 1962, 6 March 1963, 5 April 1963, 7 June 1963, 4 October 1963, 7 February 1964 and 3 July 1964.

123 CASTLES, *op. cit.*, 84.

after Sharland commenced his job.[124] The overlapping of responsibilities of the main Board, the subsidiary boards and of Sharland himself proved a source of confusion and frustration for the latter, who advised in 1950 that the subsidiary boards be abolished. This advice was accepted in relation to the Port Arthur Board, which was not reappointed after 30 June 1950. The other boards were allowed to continue, but with a diminution of their powers.

The statutory Chair of the SPB was also the Director of the Lands Department. The immediate post-war Chair, Pitt, enthusiastically supported the Board's activities and ensured that they received his Department's co-operation. Under his leadership, the SPB expanded and diversified. After Pitt died in 1953, the work of the SPB continued to grow. By 1958, seventeen historic sites had been proclaimed compared with seven in 1947; and National Parks now extended over nearly 600,000 acres.[125] The new reserves all required administration and maintenance, which subjected the Board to further pressure.

In fact, maintenance of the historic reserves other than Port Arthur and Entally was completely neglected. Risdon, for example, was described as overgrown with grass and weeds,[126] even though the 1946 historical sub-committee recommended that it be laid out as a park under the guidance of a landscape gardner.[127] But the most serious example of neglect occurred at the Saltwater River Coal Mines. In 1950 these ruins were judged unsafe, and the SPB erected notices warning tourists of the fact.[128] Although a caretaker had been employed briefly in 1946,[129] an attempt to engage a replacement in 1951 failed,[130] and the site remained largely unprotected. Lorry loads of bricks were removed from the underground cells and the ovens, and in August 1951 a man was fined a mere £2 for stealing 250 bricks from the reserve, the only such prosecution.[131] In 1955, a stone chimney was removed from the Coal

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124 AA264, *Minutes of the Scenery Preservation Board*, 2 May 1947.

125 AA494/25, *Scenery Preservation Board Annual Report 1957-58*. Both the above figures count Port Arthur Town as a single site.

126 MERCURY, 27 January 1966.

127 AA264, *Minutes of the Scenery Preservation Board*, Historical Sub-Committee meeting, 3 May 1946. This meeting also recommended that 'the old house be partially restored and furnished as a museum and tea room'.

128 *Ibid.*, 1 December 1950.

129 AA610/4, *General Correspondence, Port Arthur Scenic Reserves Board: Saltwater River*: Henry to Secretary, 9 December 1946.

130 AA264, *Minutes of the Scenery Preservation Board*, 19 October 1951.

131 AA610/4, *General Correspondence, Port Arthur Scenic Reserves Board: Saltwater River*: Philip to Ferguson, undated and MERCURY, undated, court report citing date of the offence as 'on or about 13 August 1951'.

Mines to Port Arthur to preserve it against 'further damage and possible theft'.[132] Two years later, Sharland recommended that a warden be appointed and accommodated at the reserve, the pay to be £1 per week plus guide fees.[133] The Board approved the recommendation and agreed to build the necessary cottage,[134] but despite several applications for such a position no appointment was made.[135] Unprotected, the site continued to deteriorate.

FIGURE 6.3

NEGLECT AT RISDON COVE

Sharland's frustrations with his position may be imagined. Moreover, according to several Board members, the new Chair, Frank Miles, the Head of the Lands Department, 'resented the extra work load involved in administering the Board's activities and constantly thwarted attempts by its officers to implement policy and

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132 AA264, *Minutes of the Scenery Preservation Board*, Executive Statement 1955, no 3.

133 AA610/4, *General Correspondence, Port Arthur Scenic Reserves Board: Saltwater River*: Sharland to SPB, 5 June 1957.

134 AA264, *Minutes of the Scenery Preservation Board*, 21 June 1957.

135 AA610/4, *General Correspondence, Port Arthur Scenic Reserves Board: Saltwater River*: Price to Sharland, 7 June 1960.

assert some independence from what had become a stifling relationship with the Lands Department'.[136]

Friction between Sharland and Miles is evident in the minutes of Board meetings in late 1960 and early 1961, and at a special meeting on 8 March 1961, which had been called to analyse the SPB's accounting procedures, Sharland abruptly resigned. At a further special meeting a few days later, it was suggested that the problem had arisen from the fact that Sharland had been responsible to Miles and not to the Board as a whole. A motion was passed withdrawing executive functions from the Chair and giving them to the Secretary.[137] Attempts were made to persuade Sharland to withdraw his resignation, but to no avail. On 6 April 1961, he departed for the Northern Territory, where he remained for some years before returning to Tasmania. There he wrote a regular nature column for the *Mercury* and published in 1966, *Oddity and Elegance,* a significant work on the state's built heritage.

The legacy of Sharland's time with the SPB also included the acquisition of six other historic reserves. These were Waubadebar's grave at Bicheno,[138] an old toll house at New Norfolk which had been condemned by the PWD as a result of road widening,[139] Settlement and Condemned Islands, the site of York Town and the Steppes Homestead.

Settlement and Condemned Islands were proclaimed as reserves in 1954. The jetty on the former had collapsed, tourist boats did not visit and exotic weeds were choking the convict remains. The SPB's response to the latter problem was to release six goats upon the island.[140] Although their appetite was said to be ravenous, they made little impact upon the rate of growth.[141]

There had been interest in some form of commemoration at the York Town site for many years. In 1935, the owner offered it to the Tasmanian Society for conversion into a park,[142] but nothing was done to safeguard the few remaining relics. In 1950,

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136 CASTLES, *op. cit.*, 84. Castles based this assertion upon material gleaned from interviews with three Board members from this period.

137 AA264, *Minutes of the Scenery Preservation Board,* 8 March and 16 March 1961.

138 Proclaimed in 1957 (*ibid.*, 18 January 1957).

139 Proclaimed in 1960 and converted into a youth hostel (*ibid.*, Executive Statement 2, 1960-61).

140 *Ibid.*, 5 April 1963.

141 MERCURY, 10 May 1963, p18.

142 At this enthusiastic public meeting, the Beaconsfield Branch of the Tasmanian Society was formed on the spot, all local residents present signalling their intention to join (EXAMINER, 15 December 1935, p8).

the area was visited by members of the northern branch of the Royal Society, who urged its preservation by the SPB.[143] The area was duly acquired, a monument erected and the site was officially opened during sesquicentenary celebrations in November 1954.[144]

The remaining site acquired by the SPB was the Steppes Homestead on the Central Plateau. This remote and humble home was inhabited by two elderly and eccentric sisters. Jack Thwaites, a Board member, formed an attachment to them and their dilapidated house, even building a cottage of his own at the rear of it.[145] It was the first vernacular building to be conserved by the state.

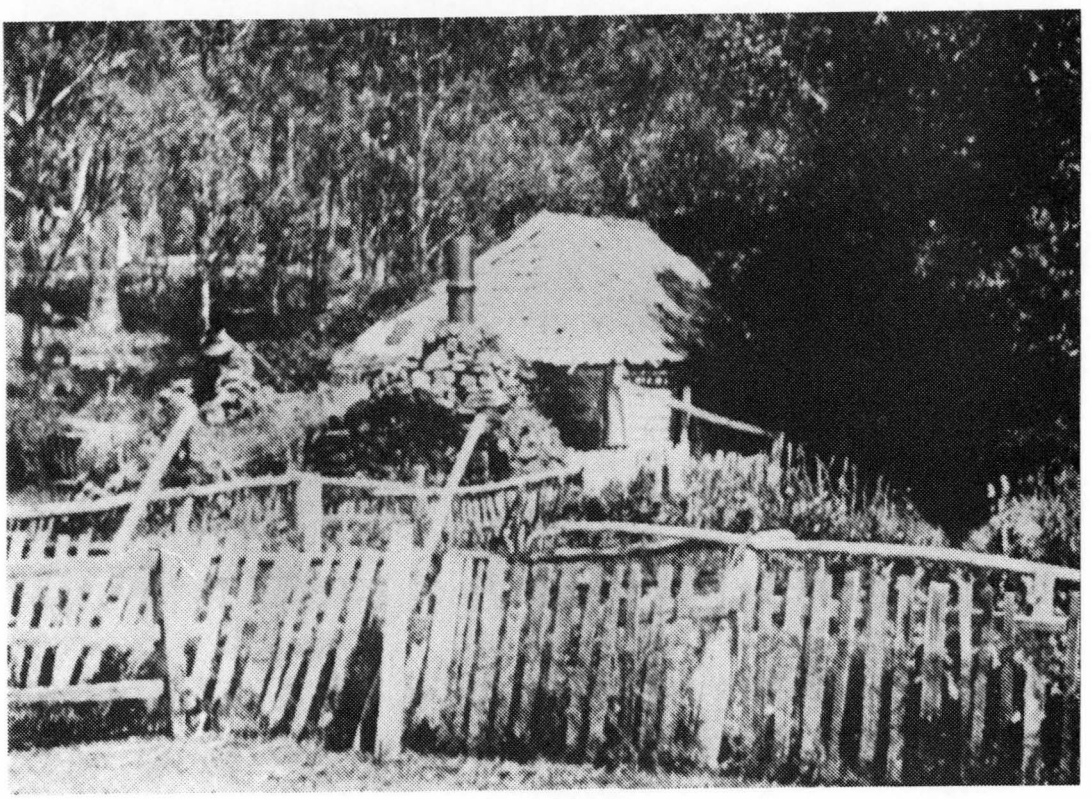

FIGURE 6.4

THE STEPPES HOMESTEAD

By any standards, the effect of the Scenery Preservation Board on the conservation of Tasmania's built heritage during the 1950s was inadequate. Given the lack of funding, it could not have been otherwise. The Cosgrove government, however, while stinting the Board, did exert itself to ensure the survival of two culturally significant buildings. In both cases it did so outside the agency of the SPB, and – more significantly – in response to public pressure.

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143 EXAMINER, 19 June 1950, p3.

144 AA264, *Minutes of the Scenery Preservation Board*, 30 July 1954.

145 Personal comment: Fred Lakin, member of SPB, 1964-1971.

6.6 PRESERVATION UNDER PRESSURE

The first threatened building to be protected directly by the Cosgrove Government was the Theatre Royal, Australia's oldest functioning live theatre. In 1945, the Hobart City Council released the *City of Hobart Plan*, which had been prepared by F C Cook, an architect and surveyor from Melbourne.[146] This extraordinary concept envisaged the virtual razing of central Hobart and its replacement with massive concrete structures. Although, ominously, Cook's plan was enthusiastically

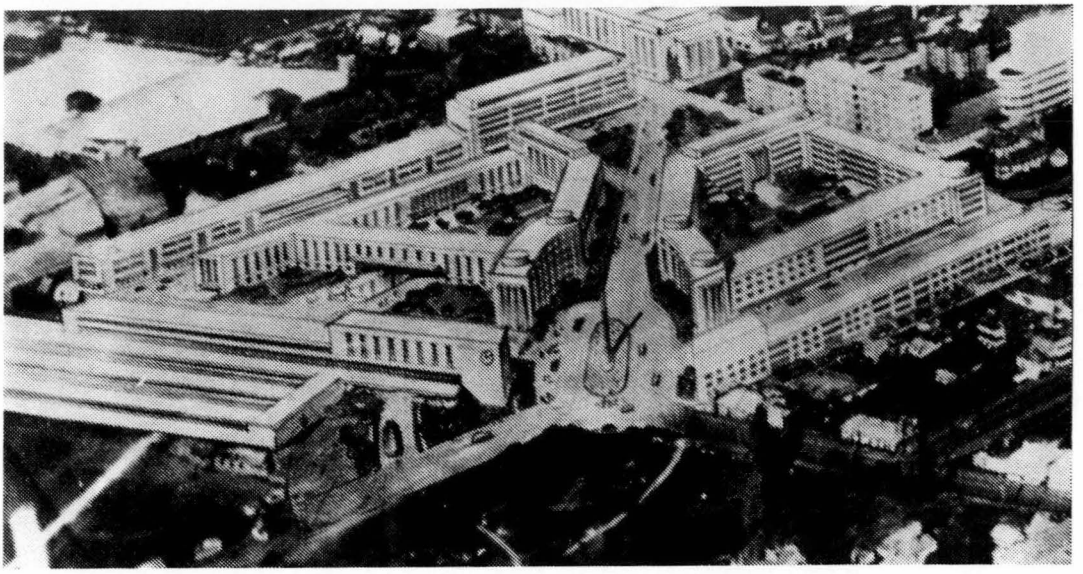

FIGURE 6.5

F C COOK'S PLAN FOR HOBART

endorsed by the HCC's Town Planning Committee, it was too expensive to implement fully. But a partial realisation was seriously considered. This would have remodelled the old working class Wapping area, and necessarily have involved the demolition of the Royal. The Musicians Union proposed to buy the building in order to save it, and the government offered to assist by providing an annual subsidy of £350. This plan was thwarted in the Legislative Council, where the theatre was described as 'an absolute eyesore and a disgrace to the City of Hobart'.[147]

In 1947, with the theatre still under threat of demolition, the Arts Council persuaded Laurence Olivier's Old Vic Theatre Company to extend its Australian

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146 COOK, F C, 1945; *City of Hobart Plan*; Walch, Hobart.

147 Quoted in THE WAPPING HISTORY GROUP, 1988; *'Down Wapping'*; Blubberhead Press, Hobart, 218.

tour to Hobart.[148] Olivier's unstinting praise for the Royal led to the passing in 1949 of the *National Theatre and Fine Arts Society Act*, which provided £12,000 for the purchase of the theatre in order to preserve it 'as a place of historic interest'.[149] Management of the building was vested in a specially incorporated body, the Council of the National Theatre and Fine Arts Society of Tasmania. Pressured by a union, the Arts Council and the man widely regarded as the world's finest actor, the government had little option but to save the building.

The second building preserved directly by the Cosgrove government was Narryna, an elegant stone house built in 1836 by Captain Haigh, a prominent Hobart merchant, in Battery Point. It had been listed as a historic building by both the Royal Society and the Tasmanian Society and was among the SPB's top priorities as a place worthy of preservation.[150] During the 1950s, the state owned Narryna, and used it as a convalescent home for tuberculosis patients. In 1954 it was no longer needed for this purpose, and was to be tendered as a warehouse. Sharland intervened on behalf of the SPB, and the sale was cancelled.[151] A deputation also waited on the responsible Minister;[152] and the Chief Secretary, Alfred White, who lived in Battery Point, argued for the building to be used sympathetically. The following year, the government agreed to vest the building in a group of honorary trustees chaired by William Crowther. It was to be run as a folk museum, in other words as 'a presentation of arts, industries and customs which, by their truly national character afforded the firmest foundations for the nation's life and future'.[153]

Narryna folk museum, the first of its kind in Australia,[154] was opened in December 1957. Its name was changed to the Van Diemen's Land Memorial Folk Museum, and within a few years visitor numbers had exceeded 7,000.[155] Because of lack of space, the display could not be changed, so locals tended to come only once. For this

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148 COMING EVENTS 7 (2), April 1967.

149 *National Theatre and Fine Arts Society Act 1949* (no 15 of 1949).

150 AA577/9, *Narryna Correspondence*: Secretary SPB to Secretary for Lands, 23 February 1954.

151 SHARLAND, M, 1966; *Oddity and Elegance*; Fullers, Hobart, 32.

152 MERCURY, 3 April 1954.

153 Text of a speech delivered by Dr Balfour, an English authority on folk museums, at the opening of the Narryna folk museum. Reported in the MERCURY, 3 December 1957, p5.

154 MERCURY, 3 December 1957, p5.

155 In 1963/64 there were 6,713 visitors (AA494/137 – 695-1-38, *Narryna*, VDL Folk Museum Report 1963/64). The following year there were 7,537 (AA494/137 – 695-1-38, *Narryna*, VDL Folk Museum Report 1964/65).

reason the museum was highly dependent upon tourists, and was well publicised by the Hobart Bureau of the Tourist Department.[156]

Both the Theatre Royal and Narryna were buildings which could generate income. Moreover, by entrusting their management to honorary committees, the government was able to minimise its on-going financial commitment to upkeep. Thus, in spite of opposition, particularly from the culturally indifferent upper house, the government could in both instances justify its decision to preserve. But, for the bulk of Tasmania's threatened historical buildings, it was difficult to conceive of any income generating activities which would make them sound enough investments for government purchase to be contemplated. By 1960, it was clear that if they were to be saved, it would have to be by private citizens.

6.7 SUMMARY

In 1945 there were strong reasons for believing that the Tasmanian government would attach considerable importance to the conservation of the state's built heritage. The recent expansion and increase in funding level of the Scenery Preservation Board, the acceptance of the McGowan plan for Port Arthur and the SPB's commitment to placing the preservation of historic buildings high on its agenda all encouraged this belief. Over the next fifteen years, however, it was proved largely vain. The reason for this was partly financial, partly ideological.

It was no accident that the germ from which grew the SPB's interest in the built heritage was planted by the Director of the Tourist Department. Tasmania's old buildings were seen by him as an asset which his department could exploit. Accordingly, he wrote to the SPB in July 1945 asking it to approach the government as to its policy on historic buildings. The Board then decided to meet with Basil Rait of the Tasmanian Society 'to arrive at some definite policy as to acquisition and preservation of historic buildings'.[157] No such policy was formulated or even discussed. Col M H Cruickshank made the single pertinent point that what was required was a definition of what constituted a historic building.[158] No answer was provided, then or at any other time.

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156 AA494/137 - 695-1-38, *Narryna*: Minister for Tourists to Chief Secretary, 12 February 1960 and VDL Folk Museum Report 1963/64.

157 AA264, *Minutes of the Scenery Preservation Board*, 28 September 1945.

158 *Ibid.*, 9 October 1945.

This lack of a clear policy ensured that the SPB's approach to the conservation of historic buildings was essentially reactive and opportunistic. Although the deliberations of the Board frequently included a deal of idealistic conservationist rhetoric, its actual decisions to acquire or to spend money on a building were almost invariably governed by the presumed relationship the building in question bore toward the tourist industry. Of all the Board's acquisitions, only the Steppes Homestead would appear to have been acquired for ideological reasons alone. Situated in a region which attracted visitors because of its trout fishing and scenery, this unostentatious home generated no income and is unlikely to have had a perceptible influence on the tourist industry. Certainly, its reservation would have been hard to justify on that ground. As the SPB's sole ideologically-driven acquisition, the Steppes Homestead casts a significant light on the Board's unstated policy.

The building was acquired because of its 'interesting link with pioneering days'.[159] And it was this aspect of Tasmania's past which, for ideological reasons, the SPB were keen not only to promote, but also to commodify. They achieved this end with Entally National House. The creation of such an attraction became possible in the late 1940s for a number of reasons. In the first place such buildings were becoming available as a changing economy and demography made their upkeep harder for the traditional owners. Secondly, there was a post-war will to save such buildings, which were seen to be in jeopardy. Thirdly, their promotion struck an ideological chord with the bourgeois elite who regarded as a cultural pinnacle the lifestyle they represented. Fourthly, the increasing wealth, leisure and mobility of the lower middle-class created a clientele for such attractions.

Entally was conserved, in the words of the Australian historian, Kay Daniels:

> in isolation from its surrounds, supress[ing] any sense of the economy on which it was based, conjuring up a sense of rural domesticity.[160]

Politically, in Plumb's terms, it sanctioned the *status quo* in as much as it legitimised the authority of a ruling class which had opened up the land "so that all might benefit". And it should not be forgotten that representatives from the same ruling class still, in the late 1940s, dominated Tasmania's economy, rural politics and the all-powerful and deeply reactionary Legislative Council. But Entally, by virtue of its specific past, achieved another political end: for, having been built by an ex-convict

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159 AA264, *Minutes of the Scenery Preservation Board*, 24 February 1956.

160 DANIELS, *op. cit.* (See page 5 n17.)

girl turned successful entrepreneur, it added weight to the myth, so ably expressed by Thomas Just in 1879, that:

> [Tasmania was] a commonwealth ... in which the race is to the swift, and the prize to the strong.... [Here] a man may achieve the highest pinnacle of ambition by his talents, and no ghostly tradition of the past can rise up to chill him into cold obscurity.[161]

Along with political indoctrination, Entally also provided its visitors with many 'benefits'. In Lowenthal's terminology, it gave them 'reaffirmation and validation', 'enrichment' and 'escape'. Moreover, in the hermetic nature of its presentation as described by Daniels, it was unproblematic. Those who entered its doors were received into a timeless never-never land in which for a small fee they could imagine themselves to be 'invited guests'. That such a reactionary project should enjoy the support of a Labor Premier might come as a surprise. Cosgrove, however, was in many ways deeply conservative. He also understood and made it his business to appeal to a strong conservative strain in the Tasmanian electorate. The historian, W A Townsley, has described how in 1953 Cosgrove and his wife, 'with no reference to party politics', escorted the young Queen Elizabeth around the state:

> At the end of this memorable visit amid general jubilation the Cosgroves emerged benign, tireless, ubiquitous and immaculate. They were widely respected as if they constituted part of the permanent institutions of the state. The electoral spin-off was considerable.[162]

Cosgrove's opening of Entally House and his subsequent successful appeal to the wealthy for the loan of furniture and paintings may be seen in the same light. So too can his government's support for the commodification of Narryna as a folk museum. Like Entally, Narryna was furnished and equipped to demonstrate the lifestyle of the wealthy during the first half of the nineteenth century. The push for its commodification in this way came from Hobart's bourgeois intellectual elite, which also supplied its first trustees. Association with this group was not regarded as politically harmful by Cosgrove, whereas refusal of its request could be discerned as philistinism. Besides, the group's proposal for Narryna would cost the government no money, nor would it involve it in risk. The success of this formula set a precedent. Within three years it was to be followed in a way which changed the nature of building conservation in Tasmania.

By contrast with Entally and Narryna, Port Arthur *was* problematic. It was a complex site, expensive, demanding in many ways, undeveloped and threatening to

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161 JUST, *op. cit.*, 14. (See page 52 n36.)

162 TOWNSLEY, W A, 1994; *Tasmania: Microcosm of the Federation or Vassal State, 1945–1983*; St David's Park Publishing, Hobart, 97.

fall down at faster rate than it could be propped up. It was also attractive to tourists for reasons which, it may safely be assumed, were disapproved of by the SPB. The guides' interpretation of the site, as required by the Board, ignored its history. Above all it had to be quick. Apart from that, guides were simply required to stick to a description of the buildings, and to avoid the sensational and the contentious. Delderfield, the Police Commissioner, wished to use the past of Port Arthur, in Plumb's terms, to legitimise the authority of law enforcement. He wished to present a view which demonstrated a progression towards enlightenment. The regime at Port Arthur was to be shown as a significant step along that path, and not as Clarke's 'frightful blunder'. Interestingly, in that Delderfield's contention is testable, it does at least suggest a line of research that a historian of penology could follow. The work of such a hypothesised historian would clearly have sped the death of the past as colonised by Delderfield. Historical research, though, was not favoured by the SPB. The view of Port Arthur provided by Coultman Smith was quite adequate for its purposes, and nowhere in the organisation's minute book is there the suggestion that it wished to find out more.

Above all Port Arthur was a commodity. Access had been improved by the floating bridge across the Derwent. Following its completion in 1945, transport from Hobart was no longer constrained by the times of ferry crossings. The accommodation problem was also solved by the building of the motel in 1960. Additionally, the site had an international reputation and the potential to attract a high number of visitors. This could only be achieved if more holiday makers could be tempted to Tasmania, which essentially meant encouraging more tourists from the lower middle and working classes. Because car hire and accompanied tours were in the main beyond the means of such tourists, what was needed was a reasonably priced car ferry. With this service in operation, tourism to Tasmania and Port Arthur could be expected to boom. With the boom could be expected the provision of much needed funds for the conservation of the site.

Clearly, this expected boom would have implications, not just for Port Arthur, but for all the state's built heritage. Yet the 1960s was also a decade of unprecedented urban development. As tourism was set to boom, so the demands of that industry were set against the demands of developers. In the middle were the conservationists and the government. Against this backdrop, were played out the final years of the Scenery Preservation Board.

CHAPTER 7: YEARS OF DEVELOPMENT, 1960 TO 1972

7.1 THE GREAT LEAP FORWARD

In October 1959 the Tasmanian government brought into service the vehicular ferry, *Princess of Tasmania*, to ply between Devonport and Melbourne, and the number of tourists travelling to Tasmania, especially motorised tourists, immediately leapt. In its first full year of service, the *Princess* transported 42,510 passengers to the state and 10,067 cars.[1] For the next eight years, these numbers remained fairly stable, with capacity booking throughout the peak tourist season, and sailings only falling below half capacity on some occasions in June and July.

So heavy was the demand for car berths that the Tourist Department was arguing for the establishment of an augmented service as early as 1962.[2] This was provided in January 1965 in the form of a Sydney-Tasmania ferry, the *Empress of Australia*.[3] Almost immediately, this ship was conveying an average of 1,700 cars and 13,000 passengers to the state. Despite this, demand for berths on the *Princess* continued to exceed capacity, and the government was soon urging that the Bass Strait service be extended by the addition of another vessel of similar type.[4] This occurred in June 1969, when the *Australian Trader* commenced tri-weekly voyages between Melbourne and northern Tasmania. Shortly, it was carrying an average of 18,000 passengers and 6,000 cars to the state, although this undoubtedly contributed to a small reduction in bookings on the *Princess of Tasmania*.[5]

The 1959-1960 tourist season provided a watershed year in Tasmania's tourist industry. Not only did the introduction of the *Princess* boost visitors by sea, the provision of tourist class airfares ensured a big rise in air passengers. The number of arrivals continued to grow annually, reaching 398,250 in 1972-73.[6] Although at this time there was still no mechanism in place to determine how many of these arrivals were *bona fide* tourists, a study carried out in 1973 put tourist consumer spending in Tasmania during 1971/72 at $32 million, and estimated employment in the tourist

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1 JPP 1961/60.

2 JPP 1962/55.

3 The *Empress*'s schedule provided for three sailings a fortnight, two to Bell Bay in northern Tasmania, and one to Hobart (JPP 1965/38).

4 JPP 1966/73.

5 In 1970-71, the *Princess of Tasmania* carried 10,000 fewer passengers and 3,000 fewer cars than it did in 1968-69. These drops were more than compensated for by the *Australian Trader* which carried 18,004 passengers and 6,382 cars in 1970-71 (JPP 1971/86).

6 JPP 1973/66. The population of Tasmania at the time was 371,217.

industry at 7,071 persons or 4.7 per cent of the population.[7] These impressive figures, recorded just before the end of the long economic boom of the 1960s, seemed to suggest that the 1947 prediction that tourism would grow into the state's premier revenue producer might well have been correct.[8]

Despite this success, the Tasmanian Labor government continued to neglect the tourist industry. Eric Reece, who became Premier when ill-health forced Cosgrove to retire in 1959, pinned his economic faith in the industrial development of Tasmania. In particular, he had what Townsley describes as an 'unshakeable belief – some would call it an obsession – in the development of hydro-electric power as the structural underpinning of prosperity of the State'.[9] In terms of job creation, Reece's policy was an undoubted success.[10] This, however, did not prevent the Liberal opposition from attacking it, and criticising the government for failing to develop a policy on tourism, which it saw as having the potential to play a major part in the island's economy.[11]

The criticism of the government's neglect of tourism did not emanate from the opposition alone. A report written following a 1962 tour of Tasmania by interstate travel agents concluded that 'a vast number of people in apparently powerful positions just couldn't care less about tourism as a money spinner'.[12] Two years later, Mr Atkins, the Minister for Tourists, 'stunned' the House of Assembly by stating that he did not believe in a vigorous tourist promotion policy.[13] Nevertheless, after the introduction of the *Princess of Tasmania*, the pressures resulting from the increased tourist numbers were such that additional expenditure on the industry was unavoidable. In 1959, departmental advertising was increased by 25 per cent,[14] and the following year an eight page newspaper, *Tasmanian Travelways*, was produced. Five editions of 20,000 copies were distributed annually. In 1959-60, the Department produced nearly half a million pieces of

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7 AA671/1: PEAT, MARWICK, MITCHELL & CO, 1973; *Study of the Economic Significance of Tourism in Tasmania*; 11-12.

8 See page 258 above.

9 TOWNSLEY, *op. cit.*, 200.

10 In 1960, an aluminium smelter which consumed thirty per cent of the island's electricity production was set up at Bell Bay in the north. Later in the decade, iron ore smelting was developed in the west at Savage River, and the paper mills at Boyer in the south and Wesley Vale on the northwest coast were expanded. All these industries employed substantial work forces (DAVIS, *op. cit.*, 62).

11 TOWNSLEY, *op. cit.*, 176-177.

12 EXAMINER, 12 October 1962, p5.

13 ADVOCATE, 1 July 1964 , p1.

14 JPP 1959/42.

'quality literature', almost double the quantity of the previous year.[15] During 1968-69, more than one million pieces of literature were distributed.[16]

In 1969, after 35 unbroken years in office, Labor was defeated at the polls by a Liberal/Centre Party coalition. The Liberal Premier was Angus Bethune and his Deputy was the sole member of the Centre Party and holder of the parliamentary balance of power, K O Lyons. The latter was also Minister for Tourism, and fought for the development of the industry. In 1970, the Bethune government passed the *Tourism Development Act*, which brought about a reorganisation of the Tourism Department. The Tourism Development Authority was created, and began its work in January 1971, its job being to coordinate the activities of a variety of other bodies whose work was broadly or specifically related to the tourist industry. Among these was the Department of Tourism and Immigration, which became part of the Public Service for the first time.[17] While assessment of the effectiveness of this new arrangement is both chronologically and thematically outside the scope of this study, the very fact that it was carried out is indicative of the increased importance which the Bethune government attached to tourism.

Despite this initiative, the new government was in important ways locked into the policy practiced for three and a half decades by its predecessor. For a start, it inherited a deficit of $3.69 million.[18] Its first budget was committed to allocating $23.1 million, 45 per cent of the proposed total expenditure of loan moneys, to the HEC.[19] And it claimed that it had no option but to proceed with the latter's contentious flooding of Lake Pedder, a scenic gem which rapidly achieved symbolic status in the eyes of the growing conservationist movement.[20]

The flooding of Lake Pedder was also a factor in the demise of the Scenery Preservation Board. When the HEC announced its plans to 'modify' the lake in 1968, there can be no doubt that some Board members were bitterly opposed to the idea, but the composition of the Board ensured that the proposal was supported. In consequence, it was, according to Castles, 'condemned ... by the conservationists

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15 JPP 1960/69.

16 JPP 1969/68.

17 JPP 1971/86. Other TDA committees set up to advise various bodies included the Accommodation Loans Act Committee, the Accommodation Houses Registration Committee, a Research Committee, a National Parks Committee, a Marketing Committee, and a committee to deal with promotion of the new casino.

18 ROBSON, 1991, *op. cit.*, 544.

19 TOWNSLEY, *op. cit.*, 279.

20 *Ibid.*, 289.

and then abandoned by developmentalists'.[21] The Board was also structurally inadequate to administer the reserves now under its control, over one million acres of land and twenty one historic sites by 1971. Both politics and common sense demanded that a new organisation be set up to handle its functions. So, in 1970, the Bethune government introduced the Parks and Wildlife Bill, which resulted in the dissolution of the SPB and the creation of a new department in early 1972.

But by 1972, the Bethune government was in crisis. The state's economy had gone into recession, protests against the flooding of Pedder were gaining in momentum, and on 13 March, Lyons called for the removal of Bethune as Premier and himself resigned the following day. Parliament was dissolved, and, in the ensuing election, the Labor Party under Eric Reece was returned to power in a landslide victory.

Although the Bethune government did little to effect the practices of historical tourism during its brief period of office, the legislation it introduced had radical effects thereafter.

7.2 THE RISE OF THE SPB

In general the years 1960 to 1971 were among the SPB's most productive. In 1957, the Board had been given the responsibility for administration of the *Defacement of Property Act*, effectively giving it control of advertising along the state's highways. This significantly increased both its power and its status. The latter was given an added boost in 1966, when the SPB moved to new headquarters at 161 Davey Street, Hobart, an elegant colonial building which the government acquired soon after it won second prize in the *Mercury* historic buildings competition.[22] That this purchase occurred when Tasmania's budget deficit amounted to some $2 million is itself indicative of the high regard in which the Reece government held the Board at this time.[23]

Both the parks and the historic reserves were seen by the government as important tourist attractions. In 1960, the Minister for Tourists, Atkins, stated that it was 'the combination of the scenery with historic landmarks, which gave Tasmania unique

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21 CASTLES, *op. cit.*, 96.

22 MERCURY, 17 June 1965 and AA264, *Minutes of the Scenery Preservation Board*, 11 March 1966.

23 The purchase was in fact criticised in a letter to the *Mercury* from "Wondering", who found it strange that public funds had been 'squandered on opulent accommodation for a minor Government department' at such a time (MERCURY, 25 March 1966).

appeal'.[24] In 1965, the Tourist Department's annual report cited attendance figures to support its claim that tourists were 'showing a greater interest than formerly in historic features and folk museums'.[25] Of these sites, Entally in particular benefited from the tourist boom which resulted from the introduction of the *Princess of Tasmania*.[26] However, the house still required substantial renovations, and in 1961, after agitation by the Board and a Ministerial visit, additional funding was made available for this purpose.[27] Two years later, a visiting Scottish expert on historical buildings described Entally as 'beautifully furnished and extremely well kept, ... without doubt one of the best period show places seen'.[28] In 1964, the SPB concluded that 'things [had] never run better'.[29] Over the financial year 1963/64, Entally earned £5,800 compared with Port Arthur's earnings of £4,700.[30] The following year, 33,700 people paid to see Entally, 4,500 more than in the previous year and 1,700 more than paid to see Port Arthur.[31] Copies of Entally's 'history' also sold readily, reprints being regularly ordered in batches of 5,000.

Despite its success with Entally and its heightened profile, the SPB still suffered from a cumbersome administrative structure, it was still too understaffed and underfunded to cope with its increasing level of responsibility and Jack Thwaites, who in 1960 was appointed Superintendent of Reserves, experienced the same problems with his Chair as had his predecessor, Michael Sharland.[32] Additionally, the perennial problem of Port Arthur remained.

7.3 PORT ARTHUR UNDER THE TASMAN PENINSULA BOARD

Although as late as 1962, a Launceston journalist was able to observe that, 'Mostly in Hobart the opinion was freely expressed that Tasmania should wipe Port Arthur from its own and everyone else's memory',[33] from the mid-1960s such views were rarely expressed publicly, and with reason. When T W Flowers, a councillor from

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24 MERCURY, 26 October 1960, p24.

25 JPP 1965/38.

26 EXAMINER, 21 April 1961.

27 AA264, *Minutes of the Scenery Preservation Board*, 6 October 1961.

28 From a report by Mr Ian Lindsay of the Scottish National Trust (MERCURY, 21 September 1963, p7).

29 AA264, *Minutes of the Scenery Preservation Board*, 7 August 1964.

30 *Ibid.*, 9 April 1965.

31 MERCURY, 5 July 1965.

32 Personal comment: Fred Lakin, member of SPB, 1964-1971.

33 EXAMINER, 12 October 1962, p5.

northern Tasmania, wrote to the *Examiner* in 1965 suggesting that in the promotion of the state images of paper mills and butter factories should replace those of leg chains and ruins, he was ridiculed in the paper's editorial.[34] And when T M Lipscombe, a delegate at the 1969 Liberal Party State Council thundered that Port Arthur 'should be wiped out – bull-dozed', he was treated to the boos and cat-calls of his fellow delegates. Council then passed a motion that the Liberal government 'be pressed to restore the old ... convict settlement'.[35]

The main reason for the bipartisan and general acceptance of the need to promote Port Arthur in the latter half of the 1960s was the site's growing importance as a tourist attraction. Between 1959 and 1964, it was thought that half a million people visited the town, although only 143,000 of these had paid guide fees.[36] Unfortunately, the numbers of those taking guided tours between 1965 and 1972 has failed to come to light, but in the 1964-65 season 32,000 people hired guides.[37] The money realised from this source was as ever far too little to cover the costs of conservation. From 1962, responsibility for this impossible task fell to the new sub-board of the SPB, the Tasman Peninsula Board.

7.3.1 Preservation

Before the new Board sat down to prepare a five year plan for the development of Port Arthur, it took account of the job which lay ahead. Apart from the main historic buildings, all of which required attention, there were the tenanted buildings to consider. So 'appalled' was the Board by their overall condition that it seriously considered whether they should be maintained or allowed to go to ruins.[38] The Roseview guesthouse was also in a 'deplorable condition'.[39] Dead Island had been neglected and lacked a jetty.[40] And street lighting was urgently required.[41]

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34 EXAMINER, 30 March 1965, p4.

35 MERCURY, 21 July 1969, p8.

36 MERCURY, 9 April 1964, p24.

37 MERCURY, 5 July 1965.

38 AA599/1, *Minutes of Tasman Peninsula Board*, 23 April 1963.

39 AA264, *Minutes of the Scenery Preservation Board*, 2 March 1962.

40 *Ibid.*, 10 October 1969 and AA599/1, *Minutes of Tasman Peninsula Board*, 25 March 1965.

41 AA264, *Minutes of the Scenery Preservation Board*, 4 May 1962.

Spurred on by the magnitude of the task ahead, the new Board requested realistically large annual allocations from the parent body.[42] Nevertheless, it was unable to tackle all the tasks which demanded attention, and priorities were established. Restoration work was first carried out at the Model Prison and the Powder Magazine, the latter being filmed by the ABC and the quality of the craftsmanship earning praise.[43] Then the Board turned its attention to the Penitentiary. This ruin was now in a dangerous condition, visitors were barred from entering it and falls of masonry had occurred.[44]

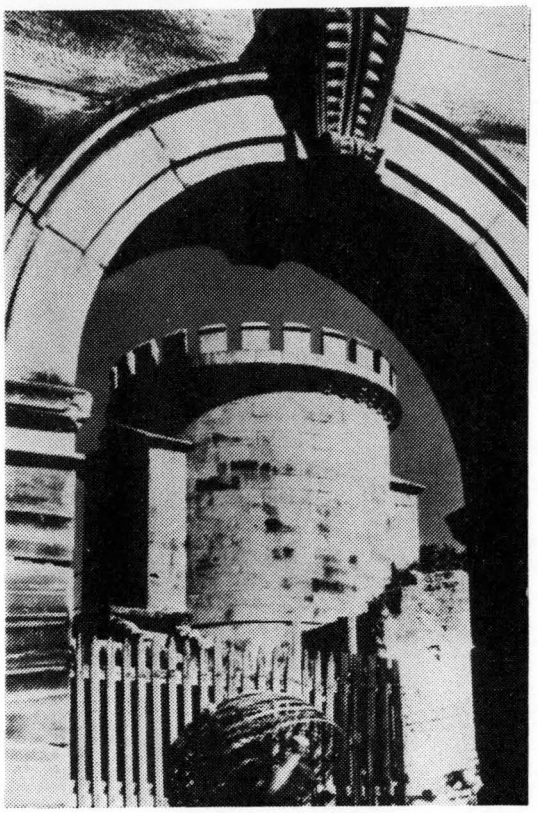

FIGURE 7.1

THE POWDER MAGAZINE

Preservation work on this building, long acknowledged to be the central feature of Port Arthur, had been deferred for many years,[45] but in 1964, the time seemed ripe

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42 £12,400 was requested for the financial year 1963/64 (AA599/1, *Minutes of Tasman Peninsula Board*, 5 March 1963).

43 AA264, *Minutes of the Scenery Preservation Board*, 2 August 1963 and 3 March 1964.

44 AA610, *General Correspondence, Port Arthur Scenic Reserves Board*, report by Sharland, 15 May 1958.

45 Sharland included this work among his 'long-range projects' in 1955, but urged the SPB that it should be put in hand without delay (*ibid.*, Port Arthur, report by Sharland, 2 May 1955). Again, in 1961, the SPB agreed to preserve the Penitentiary 'as being the central feature of this old penal establishment' (AA610/3, *General Correspondence, Port Arthur*

to embark upon it. The sealing of the 'corrugated goat track' to Port Arthur,[46] completed in April that year, was expected to result in a large increase in visitors, and in December the Minister for Lands and Works was persuaded to see for himself the 'tremendous problems facing the Board in its restoration program'.[47] The Minister appeared sympathetic and promised to take the Board's request to cabinet, yet it was to be over a year before a PWD report on the Penitentiary was presented. This put the cost of preservation at £7,100,[48] somewhat less than the Tasman Peninsula Board's estimate of £20,000.[49] Two more years passed before it was reported that the front wall had been restored to window level, and the interior cleared of rubble.[50]

Although, during the last half of the 1960s, additional preservation work was carried out on the Model Prison and the Commandant's House, the Tasman Peninsula Board was forced to defer projects previously agreed to. The 'urgently needed' street lighting was postponed in 1965,[51] and the restoration of Dead Island the following year. Frustrated by the latter decision, the Board agreed 'the only real answer' to its financial problems was to impose a toll for entry to the township, since less than 50 per cent of visitors paid for the guided tour.[52] A sub-committee was set up to investigate this possibility, but made no progress.[53]

Preservation, moreover, was only one aspect of the Board's responsibility towards the Tasman Peninsula. The Port Arthur guides had to be organised. There were long term plans to oversee, the principal one of which concerned the proposed museum. And the conservation of the Peninsula's other historic sites, notably the Coal Mines at Saltwater River, also required attention.

Scenic Reserves Board: Penitentiary: Secretary to Director PWD, 9 February 1961).

46 EXAMINER, 15 January 1958; letter from J Barrett.

47 AA599/1, *Minutes of Tasman Peninsula Board*, 26 November 1964.

48 *Ibid.*, 27 January 1966.

49 *Ibid.*, 6 January 1964.

50 AA599/2, *Minutes of Tasman Peninsula Board*, 9 November 1967.

51 AA264, *Minutes of the Scenery Preservation Board*, 9 April 1965 and 3 September 1965.

52 AA599/1, *Minutes of Tasman Peninsula Board*, 27 January 1966.

53 *Ibid.*, 24 February 1966. The issue came up again in 1970, but the Bethune government baulked at passing the legislation required to impose a toll on a public road (AA599/2, *Minutes of Tasman Peninsula Special Committee*, 27 August 1970).

7.3.2 Guides

In 1962, Delderfield was still dissatisfied with the guides. He believed that their work was 'an insult to intelligent people', and that they should stick to a prepared historical commentary.[54] Finally, this pressure led to the writing of such a work. Its author was Derwent Martyn, proprietor of the Port Arthur tearooms and occasional guide. What he produced may indeed be described as a 'description of the ruins' lacking humour, sensationalism and references to politics. Nor in the dull, dry prose is there any suggestion of compassion for the convicts. In summing up, Martyn made clear his point of view:

> It is not correct to point to the Tasmanian authorities as harsh and inhuman. It was the English system translated to Australia.... Many of our early Governors were as human as their present day successors. They had to administer a system they hated. But the scum of the British Isles were sent here, and for the protection of the free settlers and the community at large the felons had to be kept in check. The better ones among them had every chance to become respectable and useful members of society – chances they would never have had in those days in their native land.[55]

This contribution notwithstanding, frequent complaints were still received about the guided tours, and the Tasman Peninsula Board set up one of its many sub-committees to look into the matter.[56]

However, it was not simply the quality of the commentaries that was wanting, the organisation of tours was itself inadequate. Money was not collected until near the end of the circuit, when the party would pass through a turnstile at the Model Prison.[57] By then many would have dropped out, and for those who remained the turnstile was in itself a formidable obstacle. In 1962, there was a complaint about a party of 120 which had dwindled to 65 by the time the turnstile was reached: but it still took 32 minutes to get everyone through.[58]

The sub-committee's response was intelligent if ultimately ineffectual. It recommended that the permanent guide be paid a fixed salary and that party size be no larger than 40. Unfortunately, the implementation of these two proposals required that the price of tours be raised from 2/6d per adult to 4/-, and that the tour be shortened to take in little more than the Model Prison. Further complaints

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54 AA264, *Minutes of the Scenery Preservation Board*, 6 April 1962.

55 MARTYN, D, undated; *History of Port Arthur*; Mercury, Hobart, unnumbered pages.

56 AA599/1, *Minutes of Tasman Peninsula Board*, 27 March 1963.

57 *Ibid.*, 6 December 1962.

58 AA494/25: 116-3-62: Smith to Director, Tourism, 20 March 1962.

followed,[59] the numbers taking tours dropped off,[60] and coach drivers began conducting parties round the ruins, omitting the Model Prison from the circuit.[61]

Two further guiding innovations also backfired on the Board. In 1960, a public address system was installed in the Model Prison to save the guides' voices.[62] By March 1964, complaints were being received about guide Weldon's clarity. By September, they had become constant, and the problem was looked into. The fault was thought to lie in the equipment,[63] yet complaints about the 'unintelligible' guide continued in 1965 and 1967.[64] On the latter occasion, there were 80 in the party.

The second innovation was a Tasman Board decision to redesign the guides' uniforms as warders' uniforms 'of the period'. This was taken in November 1965. A year later, the decision was ratified with the added suggestion that guides be issued with muzzle loading guns 'to enhance the effect'. Two years then passed before prototype uniforms were shown to the Board. Their authenticity was then checked further. This took a year. Then the guides objected to the new uniforms; the tunics were too hot to wear in summer. After an initial display of firmness, the Board relented and resolved to permit the wearing of dress shirts of indeterminate authenticity.[65]

Two points are worth making about this typically protracted and muddled saga. One is that the Board unquestioningly supported the equation of the guides' perspective with that of the warders', and that the guides themselves seemingly acquiesced in this. The other is the tacit assumption by the Board that Port Arthur guides would be male. In fact, the first female guide ('a girl') was appointed in August 1971. In spite of the inappropriateness of the uniform on a woman, the Tasman Board in its final meeting admitted that the guide in question was 'outstandingly good'. The difficulty of attracting and retaining suitable guides was then discussed, and it was recommended that consideration be given to upgrading

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59 MERCURY, 16 November 1964.

60 AA599/1, *Minutes of Tasman Peninsula Board*, 25 March 1965.

61 AA264, *Minutes of the Scenery Preservation Board*, 4 December 1964.

62 *Ibid.*, 8 April 1960.

63 AA599/1, *Minutes of Tasman Peninsula Board*, 3 March 1964, 28 September 1964 and 29 October 1964.

64 AA494/25: 116-3-62: Pratt to Miles, 3 February 1965 and Manager, Tourist Department to Secretary, Tasman Peninsula Board, 8 December 1967.

65 AA599/1, *Minutes of Tasman Peninsula Board*, 25 November 1965 and 3 November 1966; AA599/2, *Minutes of Tasman Peninsula Board*, 12 December 1968, and AA599/2, *Minutes of Tasman Peninsula Special Committee*, 3 October 1969, 7 November 1969 and 11 December 1969.

the position and to the employment of females.[66] A month later the Scenery Preservation Board was dissolved and unable to enact this eminently sensible recommendation.

7.3.3 The museum

The Tasman Peninsula Board addressed the museum question in typical fashion: it set up a sub-committee to look into it.[67] The possibility of utilising one or other of the site's historic buildings to house the hypothetical collection was investigated, and in 1964 the SPB was again asked to consider purchase of the Radcliffe collection. This it decided against,[68] possibly still smarting from an unsuccessful attempt in 1963 to acquire 17 convict documents from Mrs McGinniss under the terms of the *Public Records Act 1943*.[69] Instead it resolved to assemble its own collection.[70]

Advertisements were placed in the state's newspapers in March 1965 calling for donations, but these, unlike the previous appeal for furnishings for Entally, drew little response. Nor could much material be obtained from the old Hobart Gaol, then being demolished.[71] This provoked the Board into a final attempt to purchase the Radcliffe museum. The Valuations Branch was asked to value the collection, but replied saying that it lacked an officer competent to do so. Then Mrs McGinniss, having once more toyed with the idea of selling, decided after all that she did not wish to do so. Instead, she wanted the museum to be a memorial to her late husband.[72]

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66 AA599/2, *Minutes of the Tasman Peninsula Special Committee*, 19 August 1971 and 30 September 1971.

67 AA599/1, *Minutes of Tasman Peninsula Board*, 14 October 1963.

68 *Ibid.*, 17 December 1964.

69 MERCURY, 15 June 1963, p3 and 2 September 1965, p3.

70 AA599/1, *Minutes of Tasman Peninsula Board*, 11 February 1965.

71 AA264, *Minutes of the Scenery Preservation Board*, 5 February 1965 and 5 March 1965, and AA599/1, *Minutes of Tasman Peninsula Board*, 20 June 1965.

72 AA264, *Minutes of the Scenery Preservation Board*, 12 November 1965, 10 December 1965 and 4 February 1966. The Radcliffe museum remained in the hands of the family until the 1970s, when it was purchased for Port Arthur by the Department of Parks and Wildlife. Unfortunately, there was no inventory of the collection at the time of sale, and there are allegations that many items were stolen. The bulk of the collection had no direct connection with the penal history of Port Arthur and was placed in storage, where the greater part of this fascinating private

This failure notwithstanding, the SPB did manage to collect some artefacts which it displayed in the Model Prison. It is not clear whether all the exhibits were of penal provenance. The Board did on occasions give consideration to exhibiting at Port Arthur an old beam engine, old vehicles, a horse drawn hearse and the mechanism from the Bruny Island Lighthouse.[73] It also accepted without question two stone lions from the demolished ANZ bank in Hobart.[74] This degree of eclecticism suggests that the Board's policy was not to assemble a collection telling a coherent tale about the place in which it was held, but simply to save and display interesting old things.

7.3.4 The Coal Mines

Since the introduction of the *Princess of Tasmania*, more mainland cars started appearing at Saltwater River.[75] In 1965, the round trip taking in the ruins was recommended by *Coming Events*. The visitor was told that it was still possible to 'walk underground and see the layout of this former "town below the earth"'.[76] Over the next Christmas/New Year holiday, 823 cars were counted entering the reserve.[77] Throughout the 1960s, the Coal Mines were largely neglected by the SPB.

The SPB discussed the Coal Mines reserve at some length in June 1962. It felt that a long-range development plan was needed for the site, and recommended that a caretaker/tradesman should be appointed to clean out the underground cells and put them in order. In view of the likely increase in traffic, Board members believed that an immediate expenditure of £1,000 was justified on work that would cost £10,000 in all.[78] In February 1964, the Tasman Peninsula Board again decided to seek a caretaker for the Coal Mines. By July it noted that no appointment had been made.[79] The following year saw the first initiative taken at the reserve: wooden supports were erected to prevent the underground cells from collapsing, and to

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museum still remains. (Personal comment: Peter Macfie, past Historian, Port Arthur Historic Site).

73 AA264, *Minutes of the Scenery Preservation Board*, 8 July 1955 and 3 February 1961.

74 *Ibid.*, 2 May 1958.

75 AA610/4, *General Correspondence, Port Arthur Scenic Reserves Board: Saltwater River*: Clifford to Sharland, 17 November 1959.

76 COMING EVENTS 4 (7), February 1965, p28.

77 AA599/1, *Minutes of Tasman Peninsula Board*, 27 January 1966.

78 AA264, *Minutes of the Scenery Preservation Board*, 8 June 1962.

79 AA599/1, *Minutes of Tasman Peninsula Board*, 25 February 1964 and 19 July 1964.

render the site less dangerous – if still not entirely safe – for the increasing numbers of visitors.[80]

In view of this accelerating level of interest, special funding was sought for restoration work, but this the Minister vetoed, stating that 'the ruins had deteriorated to the point where there was not much left to restore, and allocation of funds for this purpose would not be justified'.[81] Most SPB members agreed with this view, and informed the Minister the following year that transfer of its works unit to the Coal Mines could not take place until the work on Port Arthur was completed.[82] In 1969, a second initiative was taken: two interpretive signs were erected at the site.[83] Meanwhile the fabric of the buildings themselves continued to deteriorate.

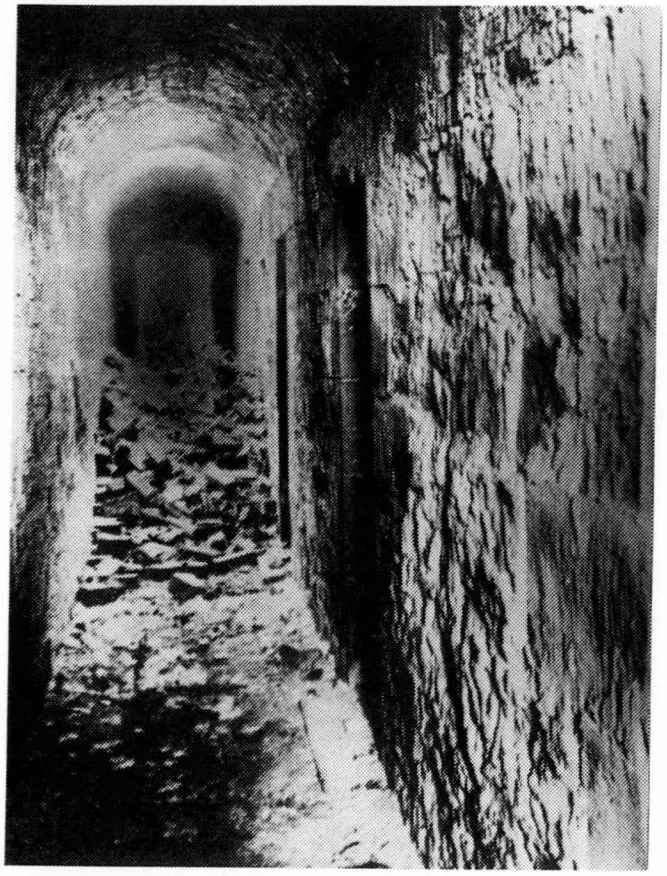

FIGURE 7.2

UNDERGROUND CELLS AT THE COAL MINES

80 AA599/1, *Minutes of Tasman Peninsula Board*, 29 April 1965.

81 *Ibid.*, 27 January 1966.

82 AA264, *Minutes of the Scenery Preservation Board*, 14 April 1967.

83 A599/2, *Minutes of Tasman Peninsula Special Committee*, 1 August 1969.

7.3.5 Appraisal

In carrying out any critical appraisal of the SPB's work program on the Tasman Peninsula during the nine years that it was advised by the Tasman Peninsula Board (1963-71), it is difficult to avoid amazement at the amount of vacillation and confusion which characterised the process. At the same time one can sympathise with the latter body's frustration. It is perhaps small wonder that in April 1970 it criticised the SPB for its lack of attention to its decisions, its uncompleted works projects and for allowing the buildings to continue in a dangerous condition.[84]

Moreover, it had only been in existence for a few months before it strongly recommended to the parent Board that Port Arthur required a resident manager 'to take an executive interest in Port Arthur as a tourist attraction'.[85] The SPB mulled this over for a year before dismissing it as 'premature at this stage'.[86] A month later the Board changed its mind and resolved to appoint a manager.[87] It sat on the decision for a further year, then concluded that in view of the poor financial position it might not be possible to fund the position.[88] In 1968, the Tasman Peninsula Board raised the matter again, then again in 1969 following comments in an auditor's report.[89] In April 1970, the SPB again favoured the appointment, suggesting that the position be upgraded to Public Servant status at a salary of $6,000.[90] In December it passed a motion calling for the urgent appointment of a manager under the *Public Service Act*.[91] But the new authority, the National Parks and Wildlife Service, was due to take over on 1 November 1971, and to this body was entrusted the management of Port Arthur. Decisions about how the reserve should be run were deferred until then.

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84 AA264, *Minutes of the Scenery Preservation Board*, 17 April 1970.

85 AA599/1, *Minutes of Tasman Peninsula Board*, 23 April 1963.

86 AA264, *Minutes of the Scenery Preservation Board*, 3 July 1964.

87 *Ibid.*, 7 August 1964.

88 *Ibid.*, 1 October 1965.

89 AA599/2, *Minutes of Tasman Peninsula Board*, 7 March 1968 and AA599/2, *Minutes of Tasman Peninsula Special Committee*, 11 December 1969.

90 AA264, *Minutes of the Scenery Preservation Board*, 17 April 1970.

91 *Ibid.*, 11 December 1970.

7.4 THE FALL OF THE SPB

The SPB were instrumental in having only three historical reserves proclaimed between 1960 and the Board's demise. They were the Callington Mill at Oatlands (1964),[92] the grave of possibly the first white man to have died in Tasmania,[93] and a potential tourist attraction, the fort on Bellerive Bluff, which had been built on one of the headlands guarding Hobart during the 1870s and '80s, the major work having been carried out at the time of the "Russian scare" in 1883.

Ownership of the fort was vested in the Commonwealth government until 1961, when the state government acquired the site and handed it over to the Clarence Commission, the local administrative body, for development. Although a restoration plan was drawn up under the authority of the Minister for Tourists,[94] after three years no work on the site had been carried out. The Clarence Commission believed that restoration would cost 'a frightful lot of money', which it did not have.[95] With no controls over the site, vandals were able to amuse themselves by wrecking the stonework.[96] The Bellerive Progress Association became concerned by this. It believed that with the expenditure of £20,000, the site could become a major tourist attraction. The Minister for Lands was approached, and he referred the matter to the SPB.[97] The Board decided to acquire the fort and convert it into a scenic attraction as soon as possible.[98] Six months later, the fort was still 'in a disgraceful condition' and frequented by drinking parties at night.[99] Eventually, the local Apex Club commenced an eighteen month project to clean up the reserve.[100] The Clarence Commission then contributed to the restoration of the site, a small amount of assistance being provided by the SPB when funds ran low.[101] It is unlikely, however, that it ever attracted significant numbers of tourists.[102]

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92 See pages 278-279 above.

93 This was the "Batchelor grave" at Taroona, south of Hobart, proclaimed in 1966 (AA264, *Minutes of the Scenery Preservation Board*, 4 February 1966).

94 SATURDAY EVENING MERCURY, 27 May 1961, p5.

95 MERCURY, 1 February 1964, p14.

96 SATURDAY EVENING MERCURY, 17 October 1964, p6.

97 AA264, *Minutes of the Scenery Preservation Board*, 4 December 1964.

98 *Ibid.*, 2 April 1965.

99 *Ibid.*, 3 September 1965 and 26 November 1965.

100 *Ibid.*, 26 November 1965 and MERCURY, 27 January 1966, p12.

101 AA264, *Minutes of the Scenery Preservation Board*, 17 April 1970.

102 Personal comment: Fred Lakin, member of SPB, 1964-1971.

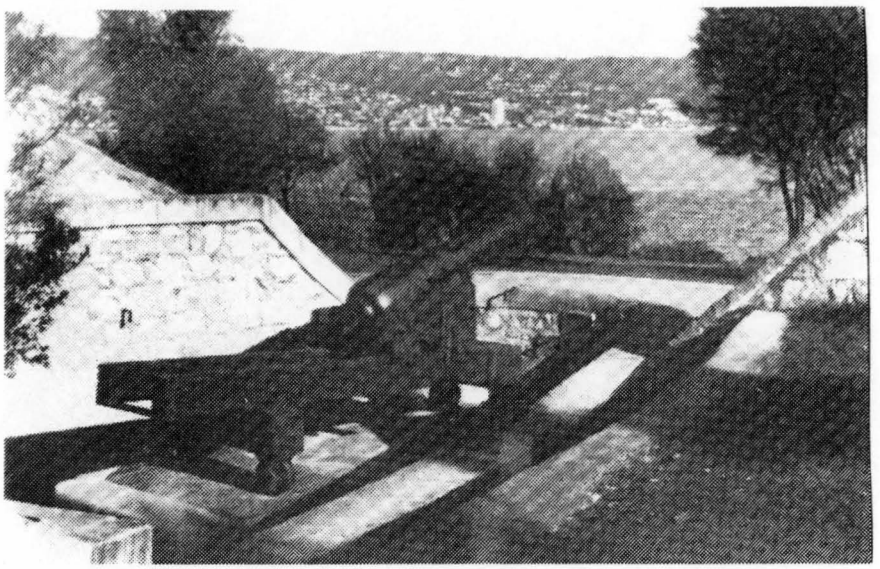

FIGURE 7.3

CANNON AT BELLERIVE FORT

If the acquisitions record of the Board was small in its final decade, the effort it spent in conserving and promoting the sites it had reserved, Port Arthur and Entally excepted, was equally meagre. Richmond Gaol, for example, was in 1970 staffed by 'a retired woman caretaker ... at a very nominal wage'. Visitor reception and collection of admissions left much to be desired, and the advertised "guide" did not exist.[103] It was also poorly promoted. According to a Richmond councillor, it was 'one of the most neglected tourist attractions in the State'.[104]

The SPB's investment in the Oatlands Mill, once the site had been acquired, was similarly meagre. Full restoration was costed soon after purchase, plans having been obtained from an English millwright.[105] But by 1970 no work had been undertaken, and the Board agreed to offer the site to the National Trust.[106] The Trust were prepared to take it over, but, like the SPB, had no money with which to carry out the necessary restoration.[107]

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103 TASMANIAN TOURIST COUNCIL, undated; *Proposed Development Plan for Richmond*; unpublished report, unnumbered pages. Note that, although undated, this report formed the basis for a presentation at a public meeting held in Richmond in September 1970 (AA494/109 – 489-1-47).

104 MERCURY, 12 June 1968, p6. In fact, 16,943 people visited the gaol during 1968/69 and 21,057 the following year (TASMANIAN TOURIST COUNCIL, *op. cit.*).

105 AA264, *Minutes of the Scenery Preservation Board*, 27 May 1966.

106 *Ibid.*, 8 May 1970.

107 *Ibid.*, 24 June 1970.

The Shot Tower was also neglected. Although the Board spent £500 on the installation of floodlighting in 1964,[108] it could not afford to spend money on necessary repair work. The tea rooms too needed upgrading, and there was an access problem which could only be solved by road-widening. Although 25,000 visitors passed through the tower in 1964,[109] by September the tenant was behind with his rent and had stopped serving teas.[110] The SPB blamed the tenant and the tenant blamed the Tourist Bureau. He complained that in the seven years he had run the tower, the Bureau had only made two bookings for visitors, and that the business was costing him £500 per year.[111] A new tenant was installed and the government agreed to spend $3,400 on necessary repair work to the tower itself. However, the Public Works Department declined to spend the estimated $9,000 needed to upgrade the tea rooms on the grounds that the rooms only accommodated twenty people. It was also clear that the adjoined residence was deteriorating and would soon become derelict if money were not spent on it.[112]

The tenant resigned in January 1968 after running the tower for less than two years. In July, the lease was offered to new tenants who agreed to carry out the repair work themselves. Nevertheless, the Board estimated that it would still have to set aside $1,000 to $1,500 a year for essential maintenance, and was happy to seize an opportunity to avoid this expense. This seemed to present itself in October when a Melbourne business man, Mr R Rockliffe, offered to spend $28,000 on building a licensed restaurant at the tower. He also undertook to 'make all necessary repairs to the tower and dwelling, restore the buildings to original condition ... and use the tower annexe as a coffee lounge and art gallery'. In exchange he required a long lease.[113] This plan appealed to the Minister for Lands, who confirmed that the present revenue was not sufficient to maintain the buildings in proper repair. He believed that the 'position would only deteriorate unless substantial improvements were made to the buildings and access'.[114]

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108 AA264, *Minutes of the Scenery Preservation Board*, 6 April 1962 and 1 May 1964.

109 *Ibid.*, 3 September 1965. This figure may be compared with the 32,000 who paid to inspect Port Arthur and the 33,700 who passed through Entally in 1963/64.

110 *Ibid.*, 4 September 1964.

111 MERCURY, 1 June 1965, p8.

112 AA264, *Minutes of the Scenery Preservation Board*, 4 February 1966 to 13 October 1967.

113 MERCURY, 30 October 1968, p2.

114 *Ibid.*

Regrettably, the sitting tenants heard about the new proposal unofficially and, having spent some months preparing for the tourist season, were dismayed. Their case was taken up by members of the Legislative Council, who spoke out publicly and called for a select committee of inquiry.[115] There was also opposition to the very idea of a restaurant at the tower from the public, most notably from the man who sold the building to the government in 1956. He was 'appalled that a licensed restaurant may be added to this monument' and believed that the proposal 'savoured of worship of the Golden Calf'.[116] Others, while favouring the idea of the restaurant, were concerned about the hazardous access to the site and its possible effect upon the road toll.[117] The upshot of the controversy was that Rockliffe abandoned his plans, and the sitting tenants had their monthly lease re-confirmed.[118]

Despite the turn of events, the SPB was convinced that a proposal such as Rockliffe's was necessary if the tower were to be run properly. The following year, when the availability of the lease was advertised, such a proposal was forthcoming. By now the Liberals were in power, and they demonstrated that support for a restaurant at the tower was bipartisan by accepting the Board's recommendation that a 45-year lease be granted. The new manager promised piped music everywhere, taped interpretation, shot pouring at weekends, Devonshire teas, and in time a licensed restaurant and a motel.[119]

The SPB also continued to neglect Settlement Island, and in 1963 were called upon by Strahan Council to build a jetty and clear the scrub effectively.[120] The council was aware that with the completion of the Murchison Highway due in 1965, the west coast would be connected with the northwestern ports, and that tourist numbers could be expected to rise significantly.[121] The Minister for Tourism also visited the island as part of a west coast tour, and was enthusiastic about its

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115 MERCURY, 1 November 1968.

116 MERCURY, 23 October 1968, p4.

117 MERCURY, 5 November 1968, p4.

118 AA264, *Minutes of the Scenery Preservation Board*, 25 October 1968, 8 November 1968 and 13 December 1968.

119 *Ibid.*, 13 December 1968 to 11 September 1970 and MERCURY, 15 August 1970, p7. In fact, the lease that was signed was only for fifteen years, interpretation was negligible, shot pouring was attempted and abandoned and no restaurant or motel has yet been built, although a conservation study commissioned by the Department of National Parks and Wildlife allows for the former.

120 MERCURY, 10 May 1963, p18.

121 JPP 1964/28.

potential, but was unable to obtain the estimated £5,000 needed to carry out the work.[122]

A local cruise operator, Jack Legarde, then made several approaches to the SPB, offering to build a jetty himself in return for an exclusive lease on the island.[123] The Board was not prepared to allow this, however.[124] In the mid-1960s its members were conscious that tourism to Tasmania was on the verge of an explosion, and were nervous about entering into arrangements which locked up areas; they recoiled from the 'exclusivity' required by Legarde.[125]

Then, in 1966, the executive officer of the Tasmanian Tourist Council visited various west coast centres on a tourist assessment trip. His report advocated the adoption of Legarde's plan, and the Tourist Council's Chair and retired Premier, Sir Robert Cosgrove, was able to persuade the Minister for Lands to allow Legarde a 14-year lease over the island provided he permitted free access to tourists not in organised groups, and that the management of the convict ruins remained vested in the SPB.[126] This form of administration remained in force until the SPB ceased to exist.

* * *

Although on a quantitative basis the role played by the SPB in preserving Tasmania's built heritage cannot be considered by any means large, the organisation did much to raise a general awareness of heritage. And often, in cases where the purchase of a building was not agreed to, the Board was able to obtain an undertaking from the owner that it would be preserved.[127] Thus the SPB's role was a good deal broader than is implied simply by a list of its reservations. It may also be pointed out that with each additional property the Board acquired, an increased proportion of its time and scarce resources came to be taken up with management to such an extend that eventually further purchases of significance were virtually ruled out.

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122 MERCURY, 8 June 1963 and ADVOCATE, 17 September 1966, p14.

123 MERCURY, 16 September 1966, p10.

124 AA264, *Minutes of the Scenery Preservation Board*, 8 July 1966.

125 Personal comment: Fred Lakin, member of SPB, 1964-1971.

126 AA264, *Minutes of the Scenery Preservation Board*, 11 November 1966 and MERCURY, 6 September 1966, p6 and 16 September 1966, p10.

127 This happened, for instance, in the cases of Dysart Church (AA264, 11 June 1948), Burlington Pigeon Loft (*ibid.*, 25 March 1949), St Peter's Pass (*ibid.*, 26 September 1952), Shene stables (*ibid.*, 7 October 1955) and the Duck Reach Power Station (*ibid.*, 22 February 1957).

Management was time consuming because preserved sites had to demonstrate to government their financial worth; it was therefore necessary to develop them where possible as successful tourist attractions capable of generating income. When a voluntary organisation appeared that was prepared to undertake this at seemingly far less on-going cost and with no risk attached, the government understandably chose to work with this organisation rather than with the official body which required paid officers to do similar work.

7.5 THE RISE OF THE NATIONAL TRUST

Of the National Trust branches set up in the six Australian states only the Queensland branch was established after the Tasmanian.[128] Tasmania's tardiness could be ascribed partly to the perception that the Scenery Preservation Board rendered a National Trust unnecessary. This was certainly the argument used by Michael Sharland in 1949 when replying to a suggestion from the Lord Mayor of Hobart that a Tasmanian branch be formed.[129] Nor was Sharland's view confined to Tasmania. The Honorary Secretary of the newly formed National Trust (Victoria) told Sharland in 1956 'what you're doing in Tasmania sets an example which we on the mainland must follow'.[130] In fact, Sharland was invited to address the inaugural public meeting of the Victorian branch.[131]

In 1954 the Royal Society attempted to form a southern branch of the National Trust of Tasmania. A small meeting elected a committee which included both Thwaites and Crowther,[132] but the attempt failed because, in Crowther's words, 'no one had the time and sustained effort to make [the body] an official and effective force'.[133]

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128 The years in which the state branches were established were: NSW, 1945; SA, 1955; Victoria, 1956; WA, 1959; Tasmania, 1960; Queensland, 1961.

129 MERCURY, 5 December 1949.

130 AA577/9, *National Trust*: Goss to Sharland, 15 December 1955.

131 *Ibid.*: Goss to Sharland, 24 June 1956 and Goss to Miles, 6 October 1956.

132 AA494/103 – 453-1-45, *Minutes of Royal Society Meeting*, 1 December 1954.

133 GREEN, R M, 1980; Notes on the Formation of the Trust and Its Earlier History up to the Time of the Formation of the Southern and North Western Regional Committees, *National Trust Of Australia (Tasmania) Newsletter* **65**, 2-16. This long article by R M Green has provided the basis for this brief account of the early history of the National Trust of Australia (Tasmania).

The successful attempt to form a Tasmanian branch of the National Trust took place in Launceston in 1960. It coalesced around a specific project which captured the imagination of the founding group. This was the purchase, restoration and presentation to the public of "The Hollies", a Georgian country house a few kilometres to the east of Launceston. When Mrs E Craig, wife of the noted antiquarian and collector, Dr Clifford Craig, advised her friend, R M Green, that "The Hollies" was for sale, he formed the opinion that a National Trust would be an appropriate body to hold the title deeds and provide security of finance should the house be purchased. Green, a lawyer, immediately prepared a Memorandum and Articles of Association based roughly upon that of the Victorian branch of the National Trust. He then obtained twelve signatories, all from Launceston. The inaugural meeting of the new association, which was held on 14 May 1960, heard that the house could be purchased, restored and furnished for £10,000, and unanimously agreed that the project was excellent. The Reece government was then approached for an interest-free loan of £5,000. Among the documentation provided for the government were the association's objects, the first of which was:

> Tourists – to help put Tasmania and its charm and attractions on the map in view of growing interest in architecture and history.[134]

Not one of the twelve objects suggested that the Trust intended to fight for the preservation of old buildings by means other than '[p]roviding homes ... for inspection by tourists of all interests'.

Doubtless delighted that the new organisation intended to operate in the area of historical preservation much as did the Scenery Preservation Board, but with volunteer labour rather than with labour paid for out of the state's budget, the Reece cabinet agreed to the loan in a matter of days. A bank mortgage was raised, and in July 1960, "The Hollies" was purchased. The Trust took vacant possession of the property in November, and the growing membership spent twelve months in restoration and repair work before the formal opening on 28 October 1961.[135] Franklin House, as the Trust renamed the building, was built in 1838 for a Launceston brewer and innkeeper. In 1842 it became a school for boys. Compared with Entally House, it has only slight historical significance, its main value residing in its architecture and interior woodwork of colonial cedar.

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134 GREEN, *op. cit.*

135 This was carried out by the Hon J L Madden, Minister for Housing in the Reece Government, the Premier himself not having a suitable Saturday free on which he could officiate. N T Green was particularly pleased that it was Madden whom Reece asked to act for him since it was through Madden that the initial approach for government assistance had been made.

Initially, there was considerable interest in Franklin House, 4,000 visitors passing through its doors by March 1962. However, visitor levels were less than anticipated. The Launceston Manager of the Government Tourist Department recommended against including the property in local bus tours, believing that the 4/- price increase would be prohibitive.[136] For similar reasons, operators of small car touring services also excluded Franklin House from their itineraries.[137]

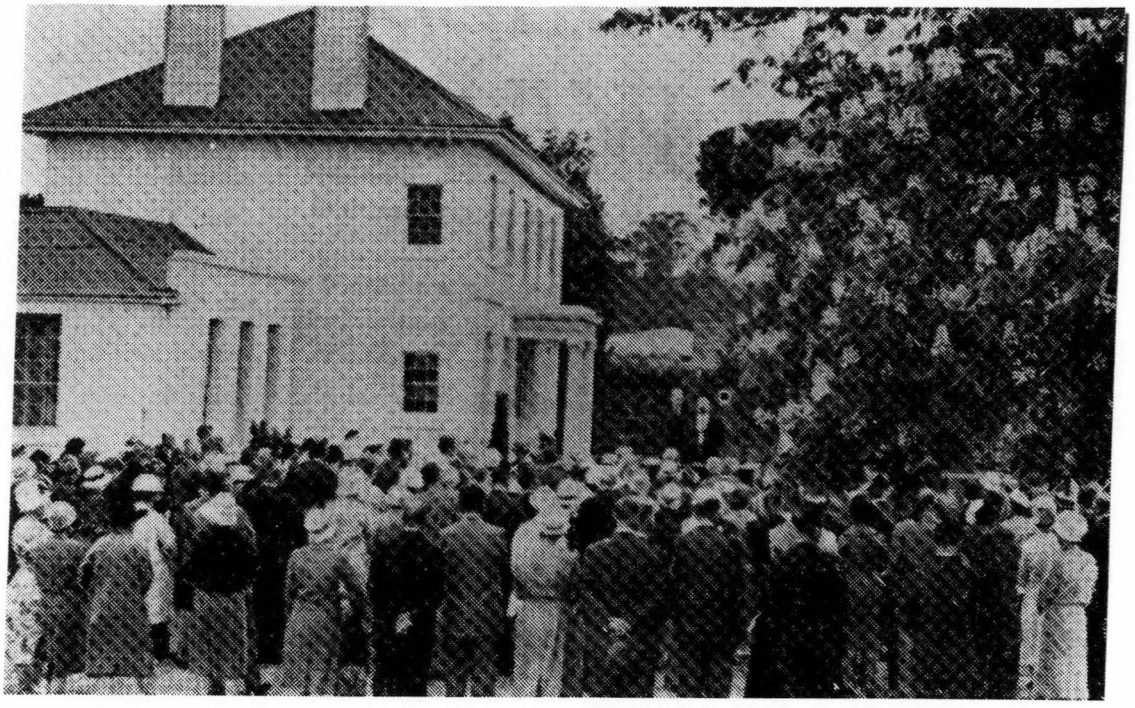

FIGURE 7.4

THE OPENING OF FRANKLIN HOUSE, OCTOBER 1961

In spite of the less than complete financial success of its first project, the National Trust developed rapidly. A positive relationship was formed with the Premier who, following a visit to Franklin House in 1962, invited the Trust to apply for further financial support. He also suggested that if the association wished to preserve Runnymede, a historical home in New Town, an inner suburb of Hobart, it could apply to the government for help.[138] The Trust accepted both offers. It sought a further £10,000 for additional work on Franklin House, and was offered £5,000. Negotiations also commenced over Runnymede. This 1844 building, for twenty

136 AA494/120 – 597-1-50, *Entally*: Manager (Launceston) to Secretary, Hobart, 25 January 1962

137 *Ibid.*: Bessell to Clemens, 14 June 1962.

138 GREEN, *op. cit.*

years the residence of Dr F Nixon, the first Bishop of Tasmania, was described by Dr Craig as an architectural gem.[139] In 1963 it was acquired by the state government and offered to the National Trust on a 99-year lease. The Trust commenced an appeal for £17,500 to restore the property,[140] and hoped to open it to the public the following year.[141] In fact, the amount of restoration required was considerably underestimated, and it was not until 1969 that Runnymede was opened for inspection.

Meanwhile, further demands were placed upon the Trust's resources by the acquisition of a third stone building. This was Clarendon, a stately Georgian house completed in 1838, a drawing of which had featured in Hardy Wilson's 1924 publication. In *Heritage of Stone*, Barrett described it as 'lovely, tragic "Clarendon", now unoccupied and falling into decay'.[142] In 1962, its owner offered it, some outbuildings and five acres of parkland to the Trust as a gift, subject to an assurance that the Trust preserve the property in the near future.[143] Once more the government was approached for funds with which to carry out the necessary work.

Concerned at the sudden demand placed upon it for the restoration of historical properties, the government responded by setting up in April 1962 a committee to vet applications. This consisted of J Thwaites of the Scenery Preservation Board, Dr Bryden (Director of the Tasmanian Museum) and V Webb of Treasury under the Chairmanship of the Attorney-General, Roy Fagan. The committee met twice without the Scenery Preservation Board having any knowledge of its existence. At its second meeting, on 5 June 1962, it decided to recommend to cabinet that £5,000 per annum be set aside for four years for the restoration of Clarendon. This was announced in the *Examiner* on 8 June, Fagan adding an explanation of the government's new policy on historical preservation:

> Many proposals had been made to Cabinet for the preservation of buildings and monuments. They had come forward haphazardly and been considered in the absence of any settled policy on the kind of buildings that should be preserved. All such proposals could now be made through the Trust, where they would be considered according to a broad plan which the Trust, in conjunction with the committee, would determine.[144]

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139 MERCURY, 19 February 1964, p3.

140 MERCURY, 7 March 1964, p11.

141 MERCURY, 4 December 1963, p2.

142 BARRETT, 1949, *op. cit.*, 8.

143 GREEN, *op. cit.*

144 EXAMINER, 8 June 1962, p2.

The Scenery Preservation Board also met on 8 June 1962, and its members evidently had not read that day's *Examiner*, for, when informed by Thwaites of the new committee's existence, they were astonished and, reading between the lines of the meeting, somewhat offended.[145] It was nevertheless made clear to them that in future even the SPB's submissions would be placed before the new committee before proceeding to cabinet.

The Trust further consolidated its pre-eminent position at the end of May 1962 at a meeting with Basil Rait. Still the Secretary of the largely moribund Tasmanian Society, Rait now also held the position of Tourist Promotion Officer with the Government Tourist Department. Putting aside his previously held prejudices,[146] Rait said he felt that the Minister for Tourism, Mr Atkins, and the Tasmanian Society were prepared to work in with the Trust, which would be accepted as 'the recognised body in the State on preservation and restoration'.[147] As a first step towards establishing a coherent preservation policy, the Trust was requested to conduct a survey of historic buildings throughout the state. As a guide, it was provided with a copy of the lists which had been prepared for the Scenery Preservation Board in 1949.

Also in 1962, the National Trust in Tasmania strengthened its claim to be a statewide organisation by the establishment of branches in the northwest and the south. The year culminated with a visit to the state by the Deputy Chair of the Scottish National Trust, Ian Lindsay, who addressed Trust meetings and in his report warmly complimented the organisation on its work.[148] In 1963, the Trust's main initiative was the *Mercury*/National Trust Historic Buildings Competition. This originated from a suggestion that the Tasmanian chapter of the National Trust organise a competition similar to the New South Wales chapter's *Sydney Morning Herald Competition*.[149] The *Mercury* offered £1,000 in prize money, and the contest

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145 AA264, *Minutes of the Scenery Preservation Board*, 8 June 1962.

146 This is partially surmise. An article appeared in the *Mercury* of 13 August 1960, entitled "National Trust in Tasmania Not Warranted". Although written by an un-named Special Correspondent, the long article's argument was based largely on the existence of the Tasmanian Society, the history of which was given in some detail. Rait was at the time a regular correspondent to the *Mercury*.

147 GREEN, *op. cit.*

148 EXAMINER, 2 October 1962 and 8 December 1962, p13, and MERCURY, 1 December 1962, 25 April 1963 and 24 September 1963, p4.

149 NATIONAL TRUST OF AUSTRALIA (TASMANIA), SOUTHERN SECTION, 1964; *Priceless Heritage, Historical Buildings of Tasmania*; Platypus, Hobart, 7.

attracted 365 entries, the winning buildings including the major tourist attractions: Port Arthur Church, Old Richmond Gaol and Entally stables.[150]

In 1964, the Southern Section of the Trust produced the glossy quarto book of photographs, *Priceless Heritage, Historic Buildings of Tasmania.* The Tasmanian chapter also played host to a visit from 62 members of the Victorian chapter, and commenced publication of a quarterly newsletter.[151] All this helped to raise the general level of awareness of Tasmania's threatened historical heritage, yet it did little to stem the tide of demolitions which proceeded apace throughout the 1960s. Without appropriate legislation, and certainly lacking funds with which to purchase every threatened building in the state, the Trust had recourse to little but moral persuasion in its attempts to save jeopardised properties.

7.6 PRESERVATION, DESTRUCTION AND LEGISLATION

In the talk he gave to the National Trust in December 1962, Ian Lindsay stressed the need for legislation to be passed in order to protect old buildings. In his native Scotland, he said, it was required that two months notice be given before old buildings could be demolished or altered.[152] No comparable legislation existed in Tasmania.

An attempt was made to rectify this omission the following year when Parliament passed the *Hobart Corporation Act* and the *Launceston Corporation Act.*[153] Sections of these Acts gave the corporations the power to prohibit the demolition or alteration of buildings of architectural or historical interest, and to require owners to keep such buildings in a good state of repair. The National Trust believed that with these Acts 'a means of preservation had been found'.[154] Further confirmation of this was provided when, soon after the Acts were passed, Launceston City Council suggested a meeting between council and Trust representatives. The council, it was believed, was 'deeply interested in the preservation of the city's early buildings'.[155]

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150 AA264, *Minutes of the Scenery Preservation Board,* 1 May 1964.

151 NATIONAL TRUST OF AUSTRALIA (TASMANIA); *Newsletter* **1**, March 1964.

152 EXAMINER 8 December 1962, p13.

153 1963 No 81 and 1963 No 82 respectively.

154 NATIONAL TRUST OF AUSTRALIA (TASMANIA); *Newsletter* **3**, June 1965.

155 *Ibid.*

Such hopes were soon dashed. In 1964, the Trust learned that Nabowla House, Launceston, was threatened with demolition. This terrace of three was thought by the British Poet Laureate, John Betjeman, to be the best specimen of late-Georgian architecture in the city.[156] Dr Craig claimed that there were fewer than fifty such buildings left in Australia, and asked Fagan if the government could buy it.[157] Fagan made enquiries, but was unable to find a government department which had a use for it.[158] By 1965 it had been demolished.

In Hobart, there were several demolitions despite the new legislation. In fact, the first notable building to fall was government owned. This was Talire, one of a 'quarter mile of colonial mansions ... unique in Australia'. Originally known as Warwick House, it was built in 1819 for G W Evans, Australia's first inland explorer.[159] Despite protests, it was demolished in order to build a new school on the site. Its stone was offered to owners of historic homes for restoration purposes at a nominal charge.[160]

It was also understood that when the new gaol was completed at Risdon, the old but still operational Hobart goal would be knocked down. Although this complex of buildings dated from 1813 and had immense cultural significance, there was little opposition to its demise. It had long been grossly inadequate for the purpose it still served, and was a subject of some shame to Tasmanians. The *Mercury* described it as a 'weird collection of unsanitary, unhealthy, and unpleasant shanties that [made] such an eye-sore of Campbell Street'.[161] Nevertheless, there were few suggestions that the buildings be preserved as a tourist attraction.[162] And although there were a small number of protests from conservationists at the proposed demolition of so culturally significant a site,[163] the National Trust was silent on the

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156 NATIONAL TRUST OF AUSTRALIA (TASMANIA); *Newsletter* **3**, June 1965.

157 AA494/137 – 695-1-38: Craig to Fagan, 16 July 1964.

158 *Ibid.*: Fagan to Minister for Agriculture, 20 July 1964.

159 MERCURY, 25 April 1963, p4; letter to the editor.

160 MERCURY, 20 June 1964.

161 MERCURY, 2 March 1956, quoted in GRAHAM, P J, 1993; *Episodes in the History of the Hobart Gaol, c.1910-1955;* unpublished thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Humanities, University of Tasmania.

162 A notable example came from Fred Goninon, who asked for the Apex Club of Hobart to be given the opportunity to use the gaol. He believed it could be 'the greatest short period tourist attraction [the] State had known' (MERCURY, 11 June 1962, p4). Mr Wedd MLA suggested in Parliament that it could raise £10,000 to £20,000 a year for charity (MERCURY, 19 October 1961).

163 MERCURY, 18 February 1965.

matter and did not include the gaol among its 1965 list of Hobart's threatened buildings. The fate of only one part of the complex aroused wide concern. This was the Criminal Court, adapted from the original Trinity Church, built in 1833 and regarded as the last example of Renaissance-style architecture in Tasmania.[164] It alone was spared when bulldozers flattened the rest of the old gaol in 1966.

By then, several other of Hobart's old stone buildings had been demolished. First to go were 73, 75 and 77 Davey Street. They were purchased by developers for £21,000 in 1964. Hobart City Council approved their demolition while the National Trust was still in the process of compiling its list of classified buildings. By the time that it was in a position to let the council know that the three buildings had been awarded "A" classifications, meaning that they should be preserved at all costs, it was too late to reverse the decision. The buildings were demolished in March 1965.[165]

Yet despite the professed embarrassment of Hobart's Lord Mayor, Mr Osborne, at the Davey Street demolitions and his protestations that the council was anxious to co-operate with the National Trust on the matter of preserving historic buildings, further demolition orders swiftly followed. In April 1965, the Trust advised its membership of the possible demolition of 167 and 169 Macquarie Street. These two large stone buildings, known as Conara and Lalla Rookh, dated from 1849. The latter was the headquarters of the Royal Society between 1852 and 1862, and housed its museum until the new building was opened in 1863. The *Mercury* published several letters, including one from Dr Crowther, protesting against the demolitions.[166] An editorial also opposed the move.[167] A National Trust deputation including Dr Craig met the Mayor and put the case against demolition 'very strongly'.[168]

Hobart City Council was faced with a quandary. The owner of the buildings had been trying unsuccessfully to sell them for two years. Although the Lord Mayor regarded such buildings as 'gems' and was loath to have them demolished, he could see no alternative. Council could not 'deny applications to pull down historic

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164 SATURDAY EVENING MERCURY, 7 November 1964, p9; *Preserve or Destroy* by Basil Rait.

165 MERCURY, 9 March 1965, p2. The National Trust's list of "A" category buildings was also handed to the Hobart City Council in March 1965 (NATIONAL TRUST OF AUSTRALIA (TASMANIA); *Newsletter* **2**, April 1965).

166 MERCURY 23 March 1965, 26 March 1965 and 25 April 1965.

167 MERCURY, 26 March 1965.

168 NATIONAL TRUST OF AUSTRALIA (TASMANIA); *Newsletter* **2**, April 1965.

buildings without accepting the obligation to compensate the owners by buying them out'. Yet it could not justify such purchases to rate-payers.[169] As a compromise, it deferred its decision for one month to allow the Trust the opportunity to find a purchaser. Thanks to a donation from a Trust member, a special officer was appointed to this task. He tried to interest a syndicate of businessmen in buying the buildings for use as professional suites, but failed.[170] The possibility of the government buying Lalla Rookh was considered, but the building was found unsuitable for any of the purposes for which it was examined.[171] The deadline arrived, but the HCC was persuaded to defer its decision for a further forty eight hours to allow a conference between representatives of the National Trust, the council and Mr Fagan, who now had the additional responsibility of Minister in charge of National Trust matters.

Fagan's preferred solution was to provide the Trust with a fund from which it could buy threatened buildings to save them from imminent demolition. He suggested a further conference to achieve this end,[172] but for Conara and Lalla Rookh he could do nothing. They were demolished in July 1965, the demolition contractor being one J Tate, who as Alderman Tate had roundly condemned the forty eight hour stay of execution granted the buildings by Hobart City Council.[173]

Other significant demolitions also occurred at about this time. 177 Davey Street was classified by the Trust as "A", 179 as 'near-"A"'. In 1964, Hobart City Council refused to grant a permit to demolish them. The following year it changed its mind.[174] They were to make way for a petrol station. Protest letters from the Trust's President, Dr Craig, and Dr Lewis, the Chair of the Southern Regional Committee, were duly sent to the *Mercury*. Dr Craig pointed out that:

> No one will ever visit Hobart to see a petrol station: many thousands would come to see such buildings as the one that is to be destroyed.[175]

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169 MERCURY, 1 June 1965, p2.

170 MERCURY, 16 October 1969, p4.

171 MERCURY, 3 June 1965, p7.

172 NATIONAL TRUST OF AUSTRALIA (TASMANIA); *Newsletter* 3, June 1965.

173 MERCURY, 1 June 1965, p2 and 20 July 1965, p7.

174 Demolition orders were approved on 5 May 1965 (MERCURY, 12 May 1965, p22).

175 MERCURY, 17 May 1965, p6.

Dr Lewis said the council's decision 'had caused Trust members to wonder whether most aldermen were prepared to pay any more than lip service to the idea of preservation'.[176]

FIGURE 7.5

ALDERMAN TATE LAYING THE DUST OF LALLA ROOKH

Also destroyed during the winter of 1965 was Cottage Green, a stone cottage in Battery Point, built in 1818. Strong claims that the cottage had once been the home of the Reverend Knopwood, Tasmania's first chaplain, were insufficient to save it. Hobart City Council permitted the demolition to clear the way for the erection of an office block, entirely out of sympathy with the nineteenth century cottages which surrounded it. The few protesters bemoaned the waste of a potential tourist attraction and urged the government to set up a public fund to buy up buildings 'of great historical interest and architectural value'.[177]

This matter was discussed by the conference (set up by Fagan) between Hobart City Council and the National Trust, which took place in September 1965. Prior to the meeting, however, the council amended the Trust's list of buildings, dropping some 'marked "A" to category "B", some to category "C" and the complete removal

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176 MERCURY, 12 May 1965, p3.

177 EXAMINER, 24 July 1965, p25 and MERCURY 23 July 1965, p4.

of others'.[178] The Trust accepted the new list, and at the subsequent conference were pleased to learn that the City Council was prepared to put aside £5,000 annually for five years for the purpose of saving old buildings provided the government and the Trust contributed similar amounts, though it was made plain that "in kind" payments would be acceptable from the Trust.[179] The fund created was to be used only for the preservation of buildings marked "A" on the new list.[180] In accepting HCC's offer on behalf of the Government, Mr Fagan said he hoped other municipalities, especially those that had classified buildings, would follow Hobart's example. The government agreed to match grants with them on a similar basis.[181] No other council was prepared to do so except Launceston's, which agreed to put aside £2,500 annually.[182]

With funding from all three sources, the Trust was now able to amass capital for its Preservation Funds (as they became known) at a rate of £15,000 (or $30,000) per year. The inadequacy of this figure may be gauged by comparing it with the amount which in 1965 a government minister estimated would be required to purchase all of Tasmania's old and historic buildings: £4,000,000 (or $8,000,000).[183] A few years later, the capital value of all Hobart's "A" category buildings in private possession was put at $2,500,000.[184]

Nor were the Trust's general finances in a healthy state. In 1966, the government recalled the loan of £5,000 which it had made to the organisation in 1960. Following an appeal, half this amount was waived, but the Trust could still only manage to

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178 MERCURY, 30 September 1965, p6.

179 NATIONAL TRUST OF AUSTRALIA (TASMANIA); *Newsletter* **5**, November 1965.

180 MERCURY, 16 August 1966, p6.

181 MERCURY, 23 December 1965, p6.

182 NATIONAL TRUST OF AUSTRALIA (TASMANIA); *Newsletter* **9**, July 1966. The recently constituted Glenorchy City Council (which administered an area including Hobart's northern suburbs) did, however, agree to grant 10% reductions in rates 'on merit' to owners of 'historic buildings'. Two of these were granted in 1966 (*ibid.*).

183 The Minister for Health, Merv Everett, made this comment shortly after the government purchased 161 Davey Street, in order to explain why the government could not purchase all such threatened historical buildings (MERCURY, 17 June 1965). When his figure was challenged by a letter to the press (MERCURY, 9 July 1965), Everett offered verification if the anonymous writer would reveal his identity (MERCURY, 15 July 1965).

184 NATIONAL TRUST OF AUSTRALIA (TASMANIA); *Newsletter* **22**, September 1969.

pay $3,000 of the $5,000 which was now required.[185] At this time the Trust had no paid staff and its expenses were met from membership fees, moneys raised from various social events, and donations, which were at least granted tax deductible status in 1966.[186]

The Trust's powers were also limited in three other important ways. In the first place, legislation did not exist granting any corporations other than the two major city councils the power to prevent demolitions or unsympathetic alterations of historical buildings.[187] Secondly, the Trust had no funds with which to purchase or restore buildings outside Hobart and Launceston. Finally, it could only argue for preservation orders to be placed on individual "A" category buildings, yet it recognised that in many cases what gave areas their distinctively "historical" character was the *groups* of buildings they contained. The Trust had little prospect of obtaining a preservation order for a "B" or "C" category building, let alone an unclassified building, even if it were part of such a group.

In the second half of the 1960s, the Trust began to address each of these limitations. It sought to overcome the first by means of legislation. In 1967, when the *Local Government Act 1962* was considerably amended, the Trust successfully negotiated for the addition of a new section, 690A, which effectively extended the power to grant preservation orders, embodied in the old *Hobart Corporation Act* and *Launceston Corporation Act*, to all of Tasmania's corporations. It also named the National Trust as the sole body upon the recommendation of which corporations were empowered to act.[188]

Secondly, the Trust encouraged its branches to embark upon local projects. In a letter to the *Mercury* in 1968, the Trust's Chair, Dr Craig, praised the government for its initiative and generosity in the cause of preservation. If more was to be done, he added, it would have to be done by 'local authorities and enthusiastic local groups'.[189] A number of such local projects were embarked upon. In 1966, the northern branch commenced the restoration of the chapel on the John Glover estate

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185 NATIONAL TRUST OF AUSTRALIA (TASMANIA); *Newsletter* **10**, October 1966.

186 MERCURY, 17 August 1966.

187 Thus, for example, when in 1965 the owner of Menton Estate, Woodbury, decided to demolish a 140 year-old cottage once owned by James Pillinger in order to build a modern home on the site, the Trust was powerless to prevent him (MERCURY, 2 September 1965).

188 The new section was contained in 1967 No 61, which amended the *Local Government Act 1962*.

189 MERCURY, 13 March 1968, p4.

at Deddington at an estimated cost of $10,000.[190] In 1971, the Ross sub-committee of the midlands branch raised money at country fairs to buy the town's old military barracks, which was then restored and turned into a folk museum.[191] In the same year, the dilapidated chapel at Wybalenna on Flinders Island was purchased in preparation for a restoration project,[192] and the Deloraine group began to restore an old hotel it had acquired to 'somewhere near its original condition'.[193]

Conservation of old buildings also held an appeal for local groups other than National Trust branches. In 1967, the Oatlands Jaycees made the preservation of the Jericho "Mud Walls", the remains of a convict probation station, their major project.[194] Individuals too, aware of the commercial potential of old buildings, were responsible for several major restorations. The first significant initiative took place in 1962 when five businessmen, three of them Trust members, bought and restored the 125 year-old Foxhunters' Return at Campbell Town. The Trust's Chair described the venture as 'an example to other districts of how self-help could be applied to the preservation and development of historic buildings'.[195] Over the next few years, a similar project was carried out at the old Scotch Thistle Inn at Ross,[196] and in 1969, Ashmore, an 1850 building in Richmond that had once been threatened with demolition, was acquired by a Trust member, restored, and opened as an antique shop.[197] Gradually, community attitudes towards historic preservation changed as the touristic value of old and historic buildings became apparent.

The Trust's third limitation, the fact that its power to influence councils' development plans was restricted to the making of recommendations on the merit of individual buildings rather than groups of buildings, was challenged by means of two initiatives, both of which drew strength from Section 690A of the *Local Government Act*. Both also related to areas of great significance to tourists.

The first concerned the inner city Hobart suburb of Battery Point, an early residential area of narrow streets, unpretentious nineteenth century cottages and the occasional mansion. It has often been identified by the term 'historical village'.

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190 EXAMINER, 17 June 1966.

191 MERCURY, 26 October 1971.

192 NATIONAL TRUST OF AUSTRALIA (TASMANIA); *Newsletter* **29**, June 1971.

193 ADVOCATE, 19 January 1972, p33.

194 EXAMINER, 19 April 1967.

195 EXAMINER, 31 March 1962, p3.

196 EXAMINER, 13 November 1965 .

197 NATIONAL TRUST OF AUSTRALIA (TASMANIA); *Newsletter* **22**, September 1969.

Tourists have been drawn to the area throughout the twentieth century, and in 1965 the Government Tourist Department promoted it with the release of a pamphlet, *Historic Battery Point*, and with a two-page article in *Coming Events*. The latter noted ominously that:

> Battery Point is a mine of architectural gems, but unfortunately it is a mine that is rapidly being worked out.... The solid freestone walls are falling to the wrecker's axe and in their place are growing the clean modern lines of cream brick, glass and steel.[198]

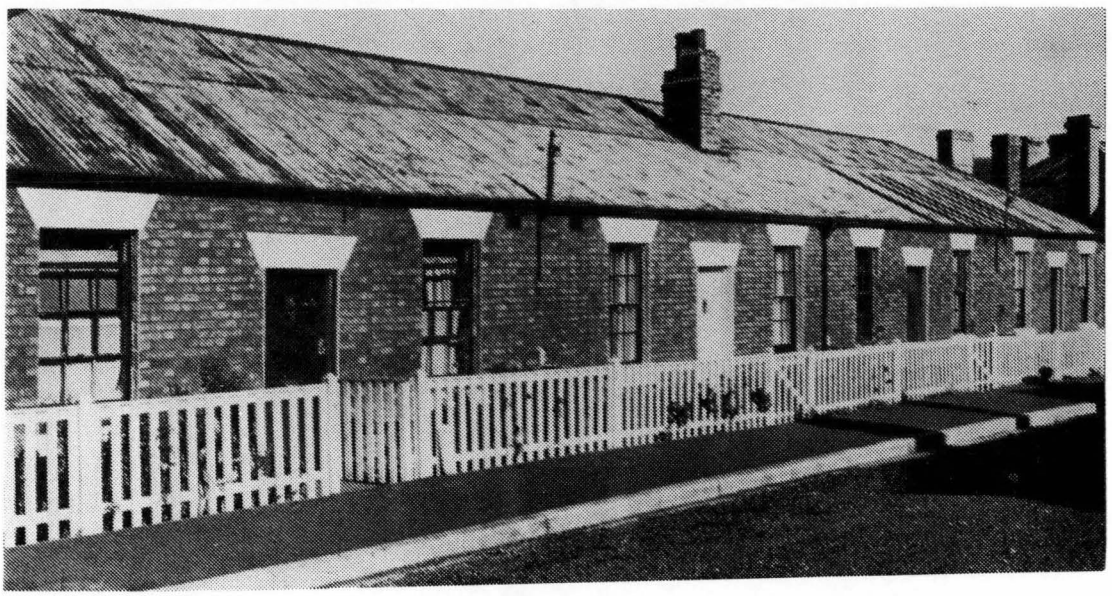

FIGURE 7.6

BATTERY POINT COTTAGES

In 1966, Hobart City Council was of the opinion that Battery Point was the best part of Hobart for residential high density development.[199] A large tower block had been erected in 1964 and planning approval had been granted for the building of an incongruous red-brick hotel in the centre of the suburb.[200] The fate of Cottage Green has already been noted, and there were fears that others of the suburb's old and historically interesting homes were under threat.[201] The council was keen to develop the area, but wished to preserve its 'unique historic character'.[202] To that end it

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198 COMING EVENTS 5(4), August 1965.

199 MERCURY, 15 March 1967, p15.

200 The *Mercury* report referred to an 'ugly' hotel going up in Battery Point (MERCURY, 15 May 1968).

201 For example, Lenna, a stately freestone mansion built by the pioneer and fleet-owner, Alex McGregor, was thought to be under threat in 1967 (MERCURY, 16 January 1967, p4).

202 EXAMINER, 29 November 1966, p31.

commissioned the Sydney firm of Clarke, Gazzard and Partners to prepare a plan for consideration. The firm invited public submissions, and the National Trust was among the respondents. Its submission was handed to the council in May 1967, and apparently was 'well received'.[203] After a description of the general area, it argued that:

> a piecemeal preservation policy with single or small building groups spread widely over the area [would] serve little purpose except in the case of those special buildings already included on the "A" list.[204]

In fact, Battery Point contained only five discrete buildings and three stretches of terrace that were "A"-listed at the time. The report stated that the first basic aim of preservation policy for Battery Point should be 'in terms of streets or areas rather than lists of particular buildings'.[205]

The report concluded with prioritised lists of building groups which the Trust believed should be preserved. Many of the buildings on these lists were unremarkable architecturally and had little historical significance other than their age. Some were of timber construction. Yet the Trust was satisfied that to replace them with new buildings, even if built on a comparable scale, would be to destroy the integrity of the area.

The plan submitted by Clarke, Gazzard and Partners to Hobart City Council in late 1967 incorporated many of the National Trust's suggestions, and 'delighted' the Trust's committee.[206] The council adopted the plan enthusiastically, the Mayor stating that after its implementation he believed Battery Point would be 'the showplace of Tasmania, and perhaps even Australia'. Council further promised to 'seek and consider advice from the National Trust' in the case of specified buildings, and to issue preservation orders over 'a number of major monuments'.[207] Battery Point Progress Association (founded in 1949) also unanimously approved the plan, its members feeling that '[b]usiness must increase in what is expected to become a "mecca" for tourists'.[208]

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203 NATIONAL TRUST OF AUSTRALIA (TASMANIA); *Newsletter* **13**, June 1967.

204 NATIONAL TRUST OF AUSTRALIA (TASMANIA), 1968; *Townscape Program;* paper delivered at Preservation of Urban Landscapes Conference, ANU, Canberra, 2 (National Trust Files).

205 *Ibid.*

206 MERCURY, 29 July 1967, p1.

207 MERCURY, 31 October 1967, p1.

208 MERCURY, 31 October 1967, p20.

In the second initiative which sought to address the conservation of an area rather than an individual building, the National Trust was only peripherally involved. In 1964, Jim Moon and a fellow architect, Barry McNeill (an active Trust member at the time), organised a meeting of the Town Planning Committee of the Tasmanian Chapter of the Royal Australian Institute of Architects in order to consider the future of Richmond. They were concerned that the eastward spread of Hobart could destroy Richmond's fabric and that any 'unplanned growth and infill could reduce it to just another dormitory township'.[209] McNeill believed that: 'The character of buildings in Richmond was not only unique in Tasmania but probably without equal in Australia'.[210]

Richmond had also attracted tourists for many years, yet its potential was undeveloped. It provided neither accommodation nor acceptable catering.[211] While it was the belief of some that the town should be preserved as a living museum and developed solely for the tourist market,[212] Moon and McNeill were conscious that Richmond was a living town. They wanted the conservation policy to 'emphasise local involvement so that Richmond ... [would not be] turned into a musty museum piece'.[213]

It was, however, a section of Richmond's traditional community that presented an obstacle to the scheme. The local landowners held sway on the council, and many of them were suspicious of a proposal which they felt might restrict their rights to subdivide and deal with their own property as they thought fit.[214] McNeill and Moon approached this problem cautiously. Following the meeting of the Town Planning Committee in July 1964, a provisional committee, the Richmond Preservation and Development Committee, was set up. This group met the Richmond Council and requested it to call a public meeting at which Richmond residents could express their views. This meeting was held in March 1965, and led to the formation of a new group, the Richmond Preservation and Development

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209 McNEILL, B H, 1968; *Richmond – a Progress Report on Township Conservation*; paper delivered at Preservation of Urban Landscapes Conference, ANU, Canberra, 2 (National Trust Files). Considerable use has been made of this paper in the following section.

210 MERCURY, 13 December 1967, p16.

211 In 1970, the local hotel provided a take-away food service and grill bar. There was still no tourist accommodation (MERCURY, 8 January 1971).

212 This was certainly the attitude of Mr McKay MLC, who wanted the town 'taken over by a national trust ... preserved as a monument to Australian pioneers ... [and] maintained as a village of the 1820s' (MERCURY, 26 June 1964, p6).

213 McNEILL, *op. cit.*, 8.

214 Personal comment: Barry McNeill.

Trust (RPDT) which included among its membership six local citizens. The RPDT persuaded the council to submit to it all development proposals, private and public, for its consideration.

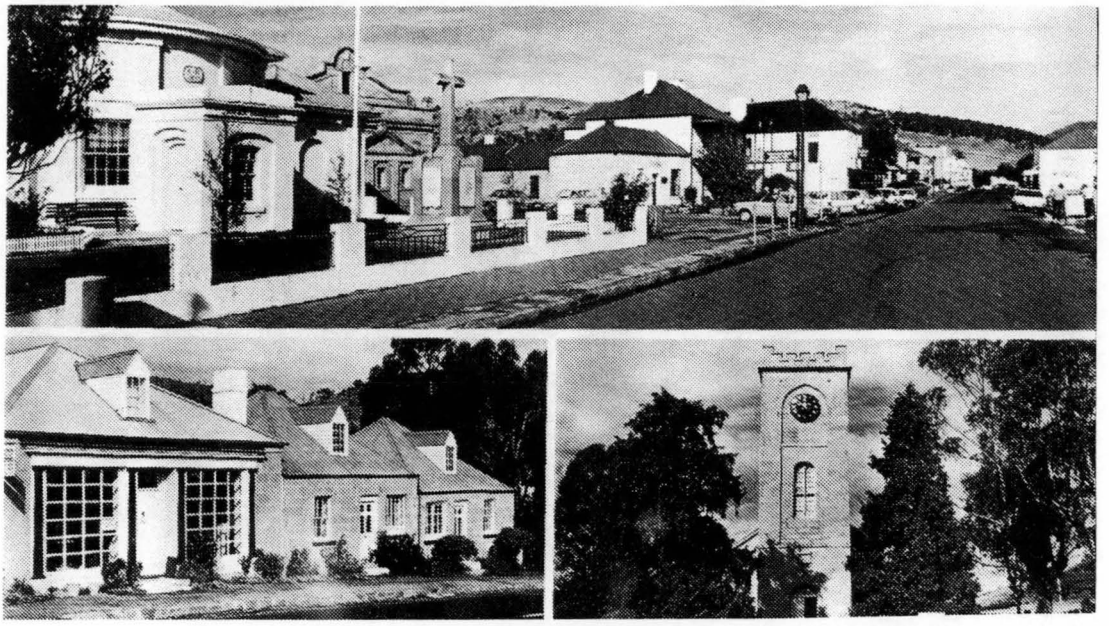

FIGURE 7.7

VIEWS OF RICHMOND

This arrangement enjoyed only limited success. While the RPDT's requests for minor modifications to private developments were generally accepted, the council tended to ignore the advice provided to it on public works, and twice failed to refer projects to the RPDT for its consideration. A major snub occurred in 1966 when the Richmond Council commissioned a town plan from the Town and Country Planning Commissioner. The RPDT hoped to be consulted during this process, but was passed over in favour of a newly created body set up specifically to advise the TCPC's office. Additionally, the RPDT believed that it had failed to harness sufficient local energy to press its cause effectively. As a combined consequence of these factors, its members began to run out of enthusiasm.

Then, in 1967, the *Local Government Act* was amended. This gave the RPDT 'new heart'. In December, a deputation met the council to explain the implications of the amendments. Further advice was provided by the Town Clerk and the Town and Country Planning Commissioner. They pointed out not merely that the Act now conferred on councils the right to make preservation orders on historical or architecturally interesting buildings and to insist that their owners keep them in good repair, they also stressed the raised status of the National Trust as the body officially empowered to advise councils, and indicated the provision in the Act for subsidy to be paid to owners unable to maintain buildings adequately. They also

suggested that the state government might match municipal allocations for preservation as it did in the case of Hobart and Launceston.

The council was suitably impressed. The RPDT undertook to carry out a historical and environmental study of Richmond. When this and a set of recommendations were presented in July 1968, the council accepted the report in principle and called a public meeting at which the RPDT outlined its thinking. The meeting voted 47-3 that the RPDT continue to develop its proposals. This it did, its emphasis remaining on the total town rather than on specific buildings, importance being accorded to the needs of development as well as to preservation.

In 1968, the National Trust conceded that it had 'been unable to grapple with other examples of significant townscapes such as Ross and Oatlands',[215] although in the latter case an attempt was made. In 1994, this midlands village had, with 87 sandstone buildings in its main street and 138 within its boundaries, the largest collection of pre-1837 buildings in the country.[216] In 1968, when its collection was somewhat larger, it formed a local group of the National Trust. Dr Craig told its inaugural meeting that the Trust had classified Oatlands as an "A" class village, the biggest of its type in the state.[217] What precisely was implied by the use of this classification for a whole village was not clear, since preservation orders could only be placed on individual buildings. Michael Sharland was sure that the distinction would lead to a boom in tourist traffic and enhanced property values, thereby encouraging locals to maintain their old buildings.[218] Compulsion, however, remained in the hands of the local council.

Despite its initiatives and despite the elevated position afforded it under Section 690A of the *Local Government Act*, the National Trust was forced to admit in 1972 that it could 'conserve only what it own[ed] itself'.[219] By then, its Preservation Funds had been used only once in Launceston and once in Hobart. In the former city, the threatened Staffordshire House had been bought in 1968, substantially renovated and leased to an insurance company.[220] In Hobart, the fund was not

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215 NATIONAL TRUST OF AUSTRALIA (TASMANIA), 1968, *op. cit.*; 1.

216 TRAVELWAYS, June-July 1994.

217 MERCURY, 1 November 1968, p6 and p11.

218 MERCURY, 21 November 1968, p4.

219 NATIONAL TRUST OF AUSTRALIA (TASMANIA); *Newsletter* **33**, March 1972.

220 NATIONAL TRUST OF AUSTRALIA (TASMANIA); *Newsletter* **15**, January 1968 and *Newsletter* **21**, June 1969.

applied until 1971, when a Georgian red brick building, 53/55 Davey Street, was purchased for resale under a covenant preventing exterior alteration.[221]

The main properties owned by the Trust still consumed most of its energy and resources. By 1965, the government had provided £72,000 ($144,000) for Franklin House and Clarendon.[222] The following year, a further $10,000 was supplied to the latter,[223] but it was not opened to the public until 1972. In the south, $30,000 was made available for the restoration of Runnymede,[224] which was officially opened in October 1969.[225]

This emphasis of the Trust did not escape criticism. "Realistic", writing to the *Examiner* in 1967, believed that the decision to restore Clarendon 'at taxpayers' expense resulted in the Trust's inability to do anything to save many smaller buildings, equally pleasing, from the wrecker'.[226] "1840 and all that", in a letter to the *Mercury* the following year, contrasted the Trust's failure to save Cottage Green with its expenditure on Runnymede.[227]

The increased authority given to the Trust by Section 690A was not the hoped for success. While Launceston City Council in 1968 issued preservation orders on all its "A" category buildings, Hobart City Council was for a long time reluctant to issue any. When in 1968 the Trust was forced to sell a Hobart property which had been bequeathed it, it did so on the understanding that the new owner would accept a preservation order on the building. The new owner was willing to receive one, but the council would not oblige; it was concerned that by so doing it could be liable for

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221 NATIONAL TRUST OF AUSTRALIA (TASMANIA); *Newsletter* **29**, June 1971. It was an awareness of the slow rate at which the Trust's funds were amassing which prompted the state government to buy Secheron, an "A" rated stone mansion in Battery Point when it was threatened with demolition in 1966 (MERCURY, 26 November 1966 and 1 December 1966). One of Hobart's oldest houses, Secheron was regarded by the Royal Society as 'probably the best specimen of early Colonial architecture in the Hobart district' (AA494/103 – 453/1/45, *Historic Buildings*). During the 1960s, its elderly owner opened the house to visitors, met them in period dress, and for a small charge escorted them round the house and served them tea (BEATTY, *op. cit.*, 77). The government used the building to house the St John's ambulance brigade.

222 EXAMINER, 24 December 1965.

223 MERCURY, 24 June 1966.

224 MERCURY, 15 May 1968, p4.

225 SATURDAY EVENING MERCURY, 23 August 1969.

226 EXAMINER, 29 April 1967, p4.

227 MERCURY, 15 May 1968, p4.

heavy expense.[228] Nor were rural municipalities eager to set a precedent which some felt might prove both expensive and politically contentious.

In the prevailing climate demolitions continued, the Trust's protests falling on deaf ears. In Hobart, the widening of the southern outlet road in the late 1960s was only completed at the expense of several old stone houses.[229] In 1971, Hobart City Council approved by a small majority the demolition of Blenheim, an old, attractive but unclassified house in Davey Street, in order to extend the forecourt of a petrol station. This occurred in spite of Trust protests and an offer by Barry McNeill to incorporate the building in a new design for the forecourt extension.[230]

In Franklin village, just opposite Franklin House, Tallintire (a stone house which the Trust judged would deserve "A" classification if renovated) was demolished in 1968.[231] In 1970, Page's Hotel, just south of Oatlands (the property of the Police Department) was demolished despite protests to the council and an appeal to the Minister.[232] Even in Launceston, old buildings were not safe from the developer. In 1970, a stone terrace in Barrow Street, built before 1830 and once occupied by officers of the northern garrison, was knocked down to make way for a school.[233] The following year, the Mechanics Institute, a Regency-style stone building dating from 1857, was cleared as part of the new civic centre development. Shortly afterwards, the Criterion Hotel and its annex, 1850, were cleared to make way for a bank. Although it deplored the 'sheer lack of imagination' of those who sanctioned the losses, the Trust conceded that it could have done more to save the buildings

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228 NATIONAL TRUST OF AUSTRALIA (TASMANIA); *Newsletter* **21**, June 1969. The house in question was 13 Audley Street, an "A" classified stone building bequeathed to the Trust in 1967. It was sold for $15,000 (the City valuation) when its upkeep proved too much for the Trust to bear (NATIONAL TRUST OF AUSTRALIA (TASMANIA); *Newsletter* **19**, December 1968). The Trust surmised that Hobart City Council was reluctant to issue preservation orders because 'it considered that the protective clauses in the Local Government Act could involve it in very heavy expenditure' (NATIONAL TRUST OF AUSTRALIA (TASMANIA); *Newsletter* **22**, September 1969).

229 NATIONAL TRUST OF AUSTRALIA (TASMANIA); *Newsletter* **14**, September 1967.

230 NATIONAL TRUST OF AUSTRALIA (TASMANIA); *Newsletter* **29**, June 1971.

231 NATIONAL TRUST OF AUSTRALIA (TASMANIA); *Newsletter* **16**, April 1968 and EXAMINER, 27 April 1967, 28 April 1967, and 12, 15 and 16 January 1968.

232 NATIONAL TRUST OF AUSTRALIA (TASMANIA); *Newsletter* **24**, March 1970.

233 NATIONAL TRUST OF AUSTRALIA (TASMANIA); *Newsletter* **27**, November 1970.

had they been classified.[234] Its exclusive preoccupation with pre-1850 Georgian architecture was beginning to be perceived as a weakness.

The main threat to a large number of the state's Georgian buildings was still neglect. When leading members of National Trusts in other states visited Tasmania in 1968 they were 'dismayed to find that so little active preservation of old buildings was being done on the main road [from Launceston to Hobart]'.[235] Although councils were empowered to issue preservation orders compelling owners to keep their buildings in 'tenantable repair', they chose not to do so, fearing that to insist upon upkeep would make them liable for subsidies under the terms of Section 690A. One senior member of the National Trust went so far as to accuse a council of deliberately 'encouraging people to let their homes become dilapidated if they wanted permission to develop'. If this were done, he argued, councils would be given an excuse to permit demolition.[236]

Ironically, the particular case which provoked the accusation concerned two Battery Point properties and took place in 1969, two years after the Trust had warmly welcomed Hobart City Council's Battery Point Plan. In fact, the council was able to argue that the developments were not bound by the plan since the plan had not yet been formally adopted.[237] For the same reason, the council did not feel obliged to seek the Trust's advice on the developments, as the plan suggested it should. As the Trust spokesperson said, 'they didn't ask us but informed us after they'd done it'.[238]

The houses in question were 100 year-old cottages of no particular architectural distinction. Moreover, they were just outside the Battery Point Plan's designated 'historic village' zone; the redevelopment which was sought (replacement of the cottages by adjacent blocks of 10 and 24 flats) therefore complied with the plan. It was nevertheless argued by the Trust, by a growing number of Battery Point residents and eventually by a majority of councillors, that this type of development was entirely inappropriate for the area. The developers revised their proposal,

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234 NATIONAL TRUST OF AUSTRALIA (TASMANIA); *Newsletter* **32**, December 1971.

235 MERCURY, 13 March 1968, p4.

236 The Trust member in question was Dr John Large, Chairman of the Battery Point group (SATURDAY EVENING MERCURY, 4 October 1969).

237 The plan was put on three months public display from 3 November 1969. Following that, objections were heard at meetings from July 1970. The plan was finally adopted in draft form in 1973 (HUDSPETH, A and SCRIPPS, L, 1990; *Battery Point Historical Research*; unpublished report held in Tasmaniana Library).

238 SATURDAY EVENING MERCURY, 4 October 1969.

reducing the total number of flats from 34 to 26. In May 1972, 418 local residents signed a petition objecting to the new proposal. On the unanimous advice of its Town Planning Committee, Hobart City Council then rejected it by eight votes to two.[239] A month later a further revision was put to council with the proposed number of flats reduced further to 24.[240] In October, council considered this after an advisory committee had reached a stalemate. Although the Mayor and the Chair of the Works Committee spoke in favour of the development it was rejected without division.[241]

There the matter seemed to rest. The developers were persistent, however, and in 1973 obtained a Supreme Court order to compel the council to approve its plans.[242] The section of Battery Point where the development occurred was outside what at the time was considered to be the recognised tourist area. Thus, in spite of opposition from the National Trust and from local residents, the council was eventually unable to resist what some described as "progress".

The National Trust was involved in a second battle over the preservation of buildings in Battery Point at the same time as the conflict described above. In this case the buildings in question formed part of a terrace of nineteenth century warehouses described by the Professor of Architecture at the University of NSW as a 'world-renowned tourist attraction of extraordinary beauty and potential which can mean hard cash in the pockets of all Tasmanians'.[243] The terrace in question was Salamanca Place, classified by the Trust as "A" in its entirety. In May 1969, the owners of three of the warehouses in the centre of the terrace advertised the auction of their property. Fears were expressed publicly that this might result in substantial modification of the buildings, and their owners, both Trust members, withdrew them from sale and offered them to the Trust at the government valuation of $67,000. At this time, the Trust had accumulated only $60,000 in its Hobart Preservation Fund. It was decided not to exhaust this by purchase of the buildings. Instead, Hobart City Council was approached to place preservation orders on them. The owners were aware that such orders could be accompanied by compensation payments and expressed a willingness to receive them.[244]

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239 MERCURY, 6 June 1972, p3.

240 MERCURY 14 July 1972, p4.

241 MERCURY, 10 October 1972, p12.

242 MERCURY, 15 June 1973, p6.

243 MERCURY, 1 May 1969, p4.

244 MERCURY, 5 June 1969, p4.

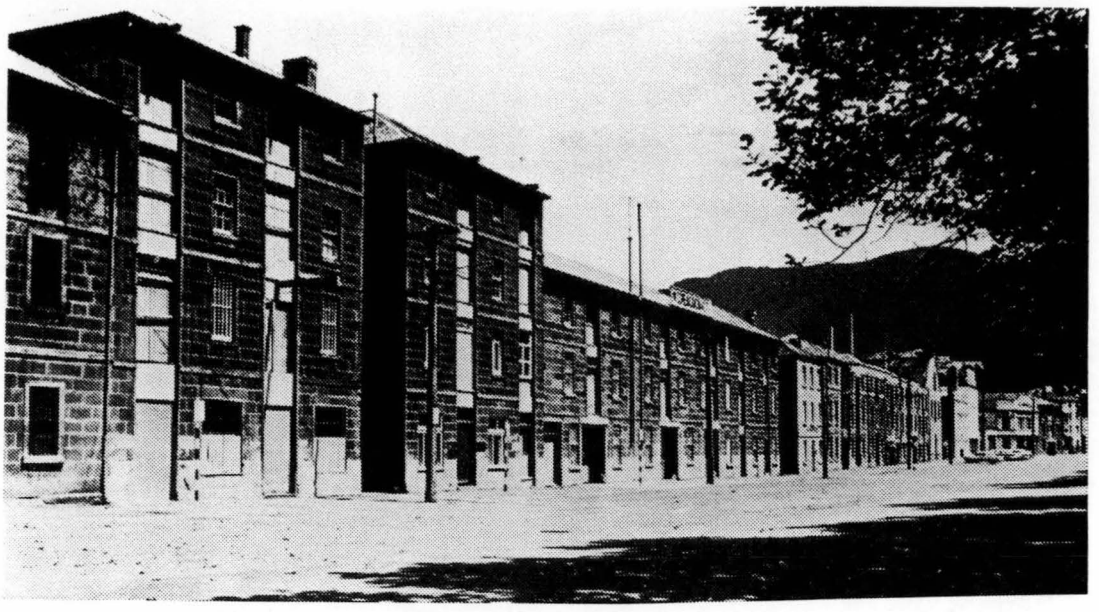

FIGURE 7.8

SALAMANCA PLACE

But it was precisely because it did not wish to bear the burden of such expenditure that the council refused to issue them. Preservation orders had only been issued by Hobart City Council in one other instance. The buildings in question composed the "A" classified Portsea Terrace in Battery Point which the council had acquired in 1958, expecting to demolish it as part of a road widening scheme. The scheme was abandoned, and the council decided to auction the buildings in 1969. The preservation order was to remain on the terrace, and its new owner would be required to restore under the terms of the contract.[245] Thus, there was no way in which the preservation order could incur the council in expense. It could not be forced to acquire buildings it already owned, nor could it be expected to subsidise the buildings' restoration if the new owner signed a contract agreeing to carry it out.

In the case of the Salamanca Place warehouses, the situation was entirely different. Under the terms of Section 690A, the possibility existed that if the owners could not sell the buildings the council might be forced to acquire them. Failing that, it could be required to subsidise an owner to restore the buildings should the owner prove that to do so would be beyond his or her means. The council therefore declined to issue preservation orders and instead opted for the issuing of interim orders under a different section of the Act. Such a move required no compensation to be paid, but had the effect of deterring would-be purchasers and infuriating the

245 MERCURY, 14 May 1969, p4.

owners who described the action as 'highly discriminatory, unwarranted and inequitable'.[246]

One month later, in July 1969, after several meetings and an acrimonious exchange in the press, the council decided by a small majority to issue preservation orders on the buildings after all.[247] Neither owners nor council need have worried. Less than one month passed before the warehouses were purchased, for a price well in excess of government valuation, by a Sydney restaurateur. He wished to convert them into a 'historical restaurant' called "The Ball and Chain", at which 'waitresses dressed as serving wenches' would provide guests with glasses of mead which they could warm with red hot pokers.[248] The buildings were saved thanks largely to their location and the part that it was presumed they would play in the anticipated tourist boom.

Despite the happy resolution of the above dispute, it raised wider questions which all parties wanted resolved. Foremost among them was the question of compensation. The Trust went on record to state that it considered 'no one should suffer financial loss as a result of a Preservation Order being placed upon a building'.[249] And no council wished to place the burden upon its ratepayers. The second question, persistently put by Alderman J Clemente of Hobart City Council, related to the suitability of the National Trust as the prime advisory body on the preservation of buildings. Clemente was concerned that the size of the task statewide was too big for a body such as the Trust, and that its non-elected status disbarred it from holding real power.[250] He believed that a special department should be set up to advise the state Minister for Tourism. Both issues were addressed to the newly elected Liberal Government of Angus Bethune when it came to power after the elections of 10 May 1969.

Three years earlier, when he was Leader of the Opposition, Bethune had stated:

> No state is as rich in historical architecture as Tasmania and unfortunately, no state seemed so careless about its

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246 MERCURY, 5 June, p4.

247 MERCURY, 15 July 1969, p3.

248 MERCURY, 6 August 1969, p1. The following year, the same restaurateur negotiated with the state government to take out a fifteen year lease on the Shot Tower (see page 307 above).

249 NATIONAL TRUST OF AUSTRALIA (TASMANIA); *Newsletter* **22**, September 1969.

250 SATURDAY EVENING MERCURY, 11 October 1969, p12, MERCURY, 14 October 1969, p4 and 15 October 1969, p4.

> preservation.... [Tasmania's old] buildings are an integral part of our tourist gold mine.[251]

He then called for legislation to ensure that no building should be demolished or altered, and for the setting up of a fund to compensate owners for necessary maintenance. Now that he was Premier, the question was: would he be as good as his word?

Bethune was a supporter of the National Trust, and in June 1970 went so far as to agree to take on the responsibility of Minister in charge of National Trust affairs. Moreover, he 'doubted if people more expert than the members of the National Trust could be found to decide what properties should be preserved for their historical value'.[252] Nevertheless, he did institute an independent committee to advise his cabinet on the course of action it should take. This committee consisted of the mayors of Hobart, Launceston and Glenorchy, representatives from the state Treasury, Public Works Department and Tourist Department, Hobart's Town Clerk, one representative from the Municipal Association and Dr Craig from the National Trust. It met five times between November 1970 and April 1971. Its recommendations bestowed no special position on the National Trust. In essence, they were:

- that the existing agreements between the state government and the Hobart and Launceston Councils on $ for $ contributions to the National Trust's Preservation Funds should cease;
- that the government establish a new fund at a rate of $50,000 per year for the next five years, and that this fund be used to purchase and restore historic buildings throughout the state;
- that corporations be required to contribute towards the costs of such purchases and renovations according to a formula based upon the size of the corporation in question;
- that the scheme be administered by a Historic Buildings Council composed of nominees of the mayors of Hobart and Launceston, the state Under Treasurer and the Chief Architect plus one member of the National Trust, to be chaired by a member of state parliament.[253]

The status accorded the National Trust was lowly; it was allowed merely that the Historic Buildings Council 'may' seek its advice before incurring expenditure. Nor was there any guarantee that the council would be sympathetic to the Trust's lists of classified buildings. Interestingly, and perhaps surprisingly, no representative

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251 EXAMINER, 18 April 1966, p4.

252 MERCURY, 14 October 1969, p8.

253 AA494/103 – 453-1-45.

from the state Department of Tourism was included on the proposed Historic Buildings Council.

In fact, the committee's recommendations were irrelevant, for when Bethune's brief fraught period of minority government came to an end on 22 April 1972 no legislation had been drafted. Eric Reece, restored to the premiership, did not recall Bethune's committee or act upon its findings. In opposition, he had called for a national plan, involving all tiers of government, to protect historic buildings.[254] Australia was to move closer to such a plan after the federal election of 2 December 1972. Gough Whitlam quickly acted to honour an election promise by setting up a National Estate Grants Program to assist the states' conservation efforts, and by instituting the Hope Commission of Inquiry (1974) which led to the passage of the *Australian Heritage Commission Act 1975*.[255]

In Tasmania, the newly created Department of National Parks and Wildlife took over responsibility for the state-owned historical tourist attractions from the Scenery Preservation Board. Thus, a greater degree of professional expertise was brought to bear on matters of conservation and management. Several more buildings and structures of historical significance, such as the old Van Diemen's Land Company property of Highfield in the northwest of Tasmania, were purchased by the state over the next two decades. Several existing properties, such as Entally, were leased to the National Trust, which took over their management. The National Trust of Australia (Tasmania) itself continued as an entirely voluntary organisation, despite a membership in excess of 2,000 and control of ten properties, until 1974.[256] Then, the federal government provided $20,000 annually and the state government $2,000 for the establishment of a paid secretariat.[257] The *National Trust of Australia (Tasmania) Act* was proclaimed the following year.

But more important than legislation or funding was the fact that community attitudes towards preservation of old buildings were changing rapidly. This was no doubt due partly to the upsurge of national pride which was a feature of the Whitlam years. It is probably also the case that it resulted from a reaction against the ruthless development which sought to transform so much of Australia's principal cities in the early 1970s. But alongside these factors, and arguably of

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254 EXAMINER, 22 June 1970.

255 A brief account of Australian heritage legislation is provided in DAVISON, G and McCONVILLE, C (Eds), *op. cit.*, 43-61.

256 Brief details of the Trust's responsibilities are supplied in NATIONAL TRUST OF AUSTRALIA (TASMANIA); *Newsletter* 35, September 1972.

257 MERCURY, 11 July 1974 , p12.

greater importance, was the widespread realisation that historically significant and architecturally interesting buildings and areas had considerable commercial value. This was vividly brought home by the fact that property values in Battery Point doubled in the nine months following the release of the plan which guaranteed the area's preservation as an historical village.[258] Yet, despite the change of attitudes, the pressure to develop remained. In Hobart, Alderman Clemente argued:

> The Hobart Corporation is facing the difficult problem of a continuously decreasing population, with revenue lagging behind the needs of the city, and with a lack of interest on the part of business people to invest in the business heart of the city. Hobart's survival depends on preserving and increasing its urban population, and the council cannot ignore this fundamental problem to please the National Trust.[259]

Similar reasoning could have been applied to Launceston. Demolition orders continued to be granted on historically significant buildings in both cities after 1972. On occasions, public opposition to them was much more forceful and vociferous than would have been countenanced by the National Trust. And although some battles ended in the courts, the legal means by which development could be opposed were both unsatisfactory and expensive. Although in 1971 Tasmania came close to being the first state to pass heritage legislation, it is now, in June 1995, the only state without it. The upsurge in historical tourism may be enough to ensure that Tasmania conserves most of what remains of its built heritage, but without protective legislation even that is still vulnerable. As an editorial of the National Trust Newsletter put it in 1972:

> 'Hard-headed', 'practical' men in business, State and local government remain essentially unconvinced that the retention of our colonial heritage is not inimical to Progress. They believe that some historical buildings should be 'preserved', but not This one. Tourist experts say we must have historical attractions, but not too many. The tourist industry wants a Colonial image, but not too authentic. The Cities want historical centres, but not if they will upset a concept of town planning handed down as a fashion from countries who had their development problems partly solved by aerial bombing during the Second World War. Community leaders are difficult to educate, and youthful conservers grow too slowly into voters to hope that enlightened logic will win the day. Perhaps it was this realisation that led the Trust in New South Wales to take a full page in the *Australian* recently, and head it, WHAT THE BOMBS DID FOR DRESDEN, THE BULLDOZER IS DOING FOR AUSTRALIA.[260]

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258 Personal comment: Barry McNeill.

259 MERCURY, 14 October 1969, p4.

260 NATIONAL TRUST OF AUSTRALIA (TASMANIA); *Newsletter* **35**, March 1972.

7.7 SUMMARY

In 1968, the Tasmanian Tourist Department stated that it had one object – 'to bring more visitors to Tasmania'.[261] This statement would seem to indicate a disregard for Tasmanians who chose to tour within their own state. A similar disregard for Tasmanians seems to have existed in the minds of those who argued for the conservation of historic monuments and sites within the state: the arguments used invariably centred upon the part such relics would play in bringing visitors to Tasmania; their cultural significance for Tasmanians was rarely mentioned. Yet the 1973 study previously quoted found that, of the $32 million spent by tourists in Tasmania, $10.5 million came from Tasmanian holiday-makers.[262] There were clearly economic as well as cultural reasons for considering heritage conservation in relation to the very people whose heritage it was that was being discussed.

The above is only true, of course, in terms of the public statements made by the heritage conservationists; and such statements were made to impress governments, senior bureaucrats, committees and developers, the people whom Donald Horne refers to as 'the deciding classes'.[263] One may be certain that members of the National Trust were not primarily interested in saving Tasmania's old buildings because they wished to encourage tourists to the state, yet they were prepared to give the highest priority to this argument – even to the extent of giving it pride of place in their objects – because they believed it would work. To argue for the preservation of a building because of its 'intrinsic worth' or 'heritage significance', they presumed, would be far less likely to impress 'the deciding classes'.

If members of the National Trust had other, private, reasons, for wishing to conserve old buildings, it is interesting to speculate upon what they might have been. While the organisation as a whole developed into a comparatively heterogeneous body both politically and socially, its founders and leaders may be regarded as part of Tasmania's conservative bourgeois intellectual elite, and the buildings they were most concerned to save were Georgian mansions. It is tempting to put this preference down to aesthetic taste, yet the buildings in question had qualities other than their looks which might also have appealed. Horne describes Georgian architecture as:

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261 JPP 1968/74.

262 PEAT, MARWICK, MITCHELL & CO., *op. cit.*, 11.

263 Horne defines 'the deciding classes' as 'people who, in increasingly complex societies, engage in, or are directly related to, the rituals of decision-making (even if they are operating in a power context greater than themselves)' (HORNE, 1984, *op. cit.*, 91).

> [the] merchant-patrician style of Amsterdam migrated in the eighteenth century to Britain ... [where it played its] historic role of housing business families and their offices in buildings that helped 'explain' their power by associating it with strength, elegance, reason and the antique.[264]

It is clear why buildings with such qualities would be likely to strike a chord with the wealthy doctors, lawyers and architects who comprised the early leadership of the National Trust. The widespread occurrence of such buildings throughout Tasmania may also be seen as making a political statement with which this group would be entirely in sympathy. In Plumb's terms, it would play its part in legitimising the power and status of the traditional ruling class. But, in Tasmania as elsewhere, this ruling class was under attack from both the political left and a new dynamic right. The attack from the left came by way of taxes introduced by the post-war federal Labor government and increased wages obtained by union pressure; the brunt of this attack was borne by rural land owners. The attack from the new right was felt most keenly by the staid urban business class of the cities. Georgian mansions were front line casualties of both assaults. In the country, they were neglected or (like Clarendon) abandoned; in the cities they were knocked down to make way for the taller, more functional blocks favoured by the new wave of developers of the 1960s.

The quandary 'the deciding classes' were placed in by the demands of the conservationists was at base economic. Developers seemed to suggest a way forward for Tasmania. They promised new money, jobs, progress: the very things which the state had missed out on so often. Under the circumstances, to argue for the preservation of old buildings because of their value as a generalised tourist attraction was inadequate. Effective arguments could only be mounted in respect of specific buildings which could prove their individual worth, and this involved both costing and compromise. If the cost of conservation 'so as to retain ... cultural significance'[265] was regarded as a poor investment in terms of the likely return achievable by a building, compromise was sought. Hence the vulgarity of the plans for the Ball and Chain restaurant and those which its owner also proposed for the Shot Tower. Both were buildings of considerable cultural significance; both were ultimately preserved because they were turned into commodities.

Port Arthur had been preserved for the same reason. Unfortunately, the Scenery Preservation Board lacked the imagination to see in the site anything more than its commodity value. No suggestion was made that it was part of the heritage of any

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264 HORNE, 1984, *op. cit.*, 80.

265 This is contained in the definition of 'Cultural Significance' contained in the Burra Charter (see Appendix I).

section of the Tasmanian community. The Tasman Peninsula Board's proposal to place a toll booth on the road leading to the town indicates that this body had no compunction about placing an identical impost upon Tasmanians wishing to visit the site as upon visitors. Conserving the site was an economic problem which had to be solved economically; cultural significance was simply not a factor in the equation. The sole ideological consideration posed by the site revolved around the time-honoured Tasmanian fear of being associated with the old sensationalised evils of the place.

It is reasonable to assume that such fears played their part in determining the silence which followed the isolated proposals to turn Hobart Gaol into a tourist attraction. That the gaol was actually in Hobart was no doubt an added factor, but most important of all was the fact that the building was in use until the early 1960s. Visitors, it was feared, would not be able to view it without concluding that Tasmania was backward. Its continued presence was unwelcome in the modern, progressive world to which most Tasmanians aspired to belong.

Yet some Tasmanians, a minority it is conjectured, had a regard for the past of their island and a love for its relics for all of the reasons expounded by Lowenthal. Many of them joined the National Trust, and as the organisation grew so it experienced to some extent a political and social broadening; in consequence, the types of buildings it sought to save from destruction diversified. Some conservation projects were driven by ideological considerations. The restoration of the chapel at Wybalenna, begun in 1971, may be regarded as one of these.[266] Other restoration projects, such as the conversion of the Foxhunters' Return into proto-colonial accommodation, were driven by commercial as well as ideological goals. While the approach to saving old buildings by putting them to a form of compatible use may seem to be eminently sensible, it could be argued that it paved the way for a heritage industry which has grown to the extent that it feeds off Tasmania's past at the expense of a dynamic present. This is precisely Hewison's criticism of the British heritage industry. Whether or not this criticism may justifiably be levelled at Tasmania will be considered in the final chapter.

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266 The intriguing story of this controversy-dogged restoration is chronologically outside the scope of this study; it may however by noted that even though the restoration was commenced for ideological reasons, tourism developers quickly took advantage of it. In 1971, the Tourism Development Authority developed a tourist plan for Flinders Island which considered 'private investment opportunities ... at ... the historic area of Wybalenna' (EXAMINER, 9 October 1971, p29).

CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSION

In the comments which follow, the question of the social value of the past is considered. This value is examined in relationship to our treatment of the relics which we have inherited from the past: the places, documents and artefacts by means of which we may decipher what happened and why. Our decisions to retain and conserve certain relics but not others, and to encourage both locals and tourists to relate in particular ways to those we have conserved, are decisions which cannot be divorced either from ideology or economics. A summary is provided of the tension which has existed between these two driving forces in relation to historical tourism in Tasmania both over the study period and beyond. In dealing with the years between 1972 and the present, it has only been possible to provide a sketch of developments. Nevertheless, various trends are clearly discernible, and on the basis of these it is suggested that decisions may be made about the kind of future which is desirable for Tasmania's past – and by implication for Tasmania itself.

8.1 THE POTENCY OF THE PAST

Implicit throughout the present thesis has been the author's belief that the preservation of historic relics and their wide interpretation, for locals and visitors, children and adults, is – or should be – a good thing. Yet so far this implicit belief has not been articulated in any coherent fashion. The ideological motives of those who have consciously promoted and exploited aspects of the past throughout the study period have been analysed, and in certain cases subjected to criticism. The views of contemporary theorists such as Lowenthal and Plumb have been drawn upon as yardsticks. But the author has been strangely reticent about where he stands. It is time to redress the balance.

Why are relics from the past important? Because they tell stories of the past. Why are stories of the past important? Because they are potent. According to Agnes Heller:

> We do not expect *the same* thrill from a real story that we do from a fictitious one: it can be rough, unpolished, badly composed, but it usually has an irresistible attraction simply by virtue of its being 'real', 'true'. We cannot read a short story without being bored or disappointed if its only merit is that of being a 'story', but if we *know* that it indeed happened, that it is 'true' in this sense, we give it our utmost concentration from the beginning to the

> end.... [C]uriosity for reality, for 'true stories', need not be aroused: it is *primordial.*[1]

Potent stories are important. They are compulsive, so we find it hard to avoid them and hard to forget them. They shape our attitudes, and hence our actions. They tell us of whom we should feel proud, whom ashamed, who are our friends, who our enemies, what has worth and what is worthless. In sum, they are significant in determining both our present and our future.

Stories adhere to relics, but the relics of the past have associations and carry values even when no specific narratives about them are told. These intrinsic qualities may be experienced in differing ways by locals and visitors. For locals, the relics of the past speak in the generality of ancestors and ancestral relations. Some may be significant in that they bear witness to past shames, some because they represent past but enduring inequities. It is likely that there will be calls by locals for the removal of such relics. In the main, however, for locals, both those who have deep roots and those who have newly moved to an area and wish to "put down roots", the cultural landscape, particularly its historic buildings, provides a secure sense of "home". As Lowenthal writes, 'a country without historic buildings is like a man without a memory',[2] and no one lacking a memory can be secure about anything. For locals, old buildings are clearly "alive", and to describe them as 'relics' may justifiably be regarded as inadequate.

The cluster of past-related benefits obtained by locals from their built heritage is broadly subsumed under Lowenthal's headings: 'familiarity and recognition; reaffirmation and validation; individual and group identity'. Visitors, if they are from the same country, may also experience such benefits – perhaps even with a thrill of recognition. It is equally likely, however, that their motives for visiting an area will coincide with those of foreigners: both groups will come seeking 'enrichment' and 'escape'. And both locals and visitors may also (whether they seek it or not) be provided with Lowenthal's remaining past-related benefit, 'guidance'. The crucial question is: how?

Before answering this question, it is necessary to recognise that people may be compartmentalised in many ways, other than into locals and visitors. To give the

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1 HELLER, A, 1982; *A Theory of History*; Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 61.

2 LOWENTHAL, D, 1981; "Dilemmas of Preservation", in LOWENTHAL, D and BINNEY, M (Eds), *Our Past Before Us, Why Do We Save It?*; Temple Smith, London, 213-237.

most pertinent examples, they may be considered by gender, by race, by class, by age group, by sexuality and by political allegiance. Historic places *per se* will in many cases speak in different ways to each of the different groups included by the above typology. Thus the remains of a nineteenth century women's prison, even if lacking conscious interpretation, will speak differently to a woman than to a man. A preserved miller's cottage will say one thing to a working class battler, another to a company director. Thus the basic choices of which historic places to conserve and promote and which to ignore are themselves politically significant. But only when stories are told about the conserved places can their political potency, their potential to 'guide', be fully realised.

Stories relating to cultural artefacts may be presented in a variety of ways, and no circumstance of their telling will be value-free. If the first question to be answered by anyone in a position to interpret a historical place by narrative means is: which story should I tell?, its natural concomitant must be: whose? Should a class or a gender or any other significant group be banished to the fringes and footnotes of history it is silently dispossessed, it is denied its historicity. Instead of achieving the dignity accorded the actors of history, members of such groups are relegated to the insignificant ranks of the "acted upon". Even when the narrator's intention is to elicit compassion for a group regarded as composed of history's victims, the very assignment of such a group to victim status is felt as both patronising and demeaning.

If the stories told to tourists in western societies are most commonly the stories which celebrate the achievements of "great men", those who have helped bring about the *status quo*,[3] that should not surprise.As the Marxist historian, Humphrey McQueen noted, 'History is not on our side. The past belongs to the enemy.'[4] Yet, as McQueen was acutely aware, Australian historians of the Left have indulged in their own misleading selectivity. The romanticisation of convicts as possessed of a 'class solidarity [that] was the one human trait which usually remained to all but the most brutalised'[5] was enthusiastically adopted by socialist historians such as Russel Ward. It was vigorously debunked by McQueen, who in *A New Britannia*, provided a convincing portrait of convicts and bushrangers as essentially petty-bourgeois, and lacking any feelings of class consciousness:

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3 This point was made by HORNE, 1984, *op. cit.*, 4.

4 McQUEEN, H, 1970; *A New Britannia*; Penguin, Harmondsworth, UK, 4.

5 WARD, R, quoted in McQUEEN, *op. cit.*, *126.*

> Attempts to find the origins of 'mateship' in the activities and attitudes of convicts are doomed to failure. What can be discovered there, however, is the prefigurement of the dominating influence on the labouring classes for the remainder of the century – a belief in opportunities for economic and political advance within the framework of existing society.[6]

While, paradoxically, the portrayal of convicts in this light would be entirely acceptable to "white-washers" such as Coultman Smith, for whom 'existing society' represented the acme of human achievement, such a portrayal, however correct, could not be expected to please a socialist historian unless presented critically – and, even in this case, it would serve as clarification rather than inspiration.

How then should the stories of Tasmania's past be told in such a way as to make their undoubted potency count? Can they be told as 'history', as defined by Plumb, to help speed the past 'of bigotry, of national vanity, of class domination'? Can they teach about social change? Can they help realise what Donald Horne describes as the 'subversive potential' of cultural artefacts?[7]

Undoubtedly, they can. By means of books and journals, Tasmania's history can readily be told so as to shape attitudes which challenge the fundamentals of contemporary society; to state as much is no more than commonplace.[8] Yet within the circumscription of the tourist industry, such a use of history becomes problematic, for here both state hegemony and market forces exercise their constraints. How these constraints have affected the interpretation of Tasmania's historical "relics" over the study period will now be considered.

8.2 IDEOLOGY AND THE MARKET PLACE, 1856 to 1972

8.2.1 Conservation

The question to be answered is: which artefacts survived as a primary result of human intervention, irrespective of market forces, actual or potential?

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6 McQUEEN, *op. cit., 126.*

7 HORNE, 1984, *op. cit.*, 252.

8 To substantiate this, one need look no further than the most recent Tasmanian history book to be published. Henry Reynolds' *Fate of a Free People* cites new evidence of promises made to the Tasmanian Aborigines exiled at Wybalenna, in order to validate land rights claims. Thus, in this instance, history is written with a pragmatic intention in the present, and not merely to change attitudes (REYNOLDS, H, 1995; The *Fate of a Free People*; Penguin, UK).

Of the places reserved at the behest of the Scenery Preservation Board, it is possible to name only the Steppes Homestead, and this site was acquired in the form of a bequest.[9] To state this is in no way to demean the integrity of the many Board members who, as the SPB minutes makes clear, had the will to save many additional places which they believed to be of cultural significance. As the Board members were acutely aware, they had to use market-based arguments to persuade the state government to fund their recommendations. They had no hope of achieving more than they did.

Of the artefacts conserved by museums, it is possible to point with confidence only to the Chinese Joss House restored by voluntary effort for the Queen Victoria Museum. Although the Museum itself could not have been unaware of the potential of the exhibit to attract visitors, the unpaid work of the Australian and Chinese restorers may justifiably be regarded as a labour of love. The inveterate collectors, Beattie and Williamson, were of course also motivated by love, but both realised that their passions could pay, and were it not for this fact neither would have built up the collection he did. Nevertheless, Beattie's decision to sell his first collection *inside the state* for far less than its market value, and for the philanthropic William Walker to purchase his second collection as a virtual gift for the people of Tasmania were acts of altruism unaffected by market considerations.

That the stalwarts of the National Trust were ideologically driven cannot be denied; yet only the decision by the northern branch to restore the Chapel at Wybalenna may be regarded as a purely ideological act. All the Trust's other restoration projects were expected eventually to earn money. Even the preservation by Oatlands Jaycees of the remains of the "Mud Walls" probation station at nearby Jericho was carried out partly because of the potential of the place to attract tourists. In the cases of a few structures, such as the Burlington pigeon loft and Shene stables, private owners were persuaded by the SPB to maintain their own historic properties. Whether or not the commercial advantages of doing so were pointed out to them is unclear.

Where other historic artefacts survived as a result of human intervention, it can safely be stated that in each case the owner or protector of the artefact in question was satisfied that it had the power to earn its keep. In the case of those that were knocked down or allowed to fall down, economic arguments for preservation were

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9 THWAITES, J, 1984; *The Steppes – Life in Tasmania's Lake Country*; Hobart Walking Club.

either unavailable or unconvincing. Market forces were equally potent in determining the kind of interpretation accorded to Tasmania's historic artefacts.

8.2.2 Interpretation

Here the question to ask is: which interpretations of Tasmania's past were promulgated in spite of either the prevailing paradigm or market forces?

The answer effectively is "none". However, there were times when market demands and the prevailing paradigm were opposed; on such occasions, interpreters of Tasmania's past were faced with a choice which may be expressed in dialectical terms. In this formulation, the thesis is the ideological need of the Tasmanian establishment to play down its seamy past, a need both psychological and economic. The antithesis is the clear commercial value of this aspect of the past. While the establishment continued to be embarrassed by the convict past, as it clearly was in 1927 by the making of the film, *For the Term of His Natural Life*, and in the 1930s by the continued promotion of Tasmania as "the convict Isle", the dialectical opposition remained. Moreover, as the tourist industry grew in importance to the state, and as the part played by Port Arthur and Tasmania's convict past in attracting tourists became annually harder to deny, so the dialectical tension grew. The promotion of the alternative "pioneer past" may be seen as an unsuccessful challenge to the antithesis, which continued to gain in commercial potency, and so remained. The synthesis did not come about abruptly, though its fruition may be seen as the publication and promotion of *Shadow over Tasmania*. This event allowed the convict past to be acknowledged not merely as a rite of passage, but as a source of pride.

This dialectical schema is adequate to explain all hermeneutics relating to Tasmania's past until 1972, although it must be said that the work of John Beattie, commercially successful though it was, did not lack integrity and was motivated by a desire for the truth as much as by a desire to make money. His work may also be seen in some ways as a beacon, lighting the way for subsequent seekers of truth. For, as the synthesis of 1941 developed into the thesis of 1972, a thesis of Ball and Chain restaurants, convict ghost tours and Martin Cash Motor Lodges, a thesis in which a tamed and commodified convict past offended no one and meant nothing apart from revenue to those able to extract profit from it, so a new antithesis emerged. Its prime movers have been those who believe that history as true knowledge may be purposeful. They do not necessarily believe that we live in the best of all possible worlds, and regard historiography as a weapon in the fight for a

better one. The dialectical struggle they have engaged in has barely begun. In the present work it is possible to do little more than indicate the battle lines and describe the opening skirmishes in what may well become a protracted war.

8.3 THE NEW DIALECTIC, 1972 TO 1995

The economic and social changes which have taken place in Tasmania since 1972 have been profound. It has become apparent to all political parties that the state can no longer expect to rely either upon its major extractive industries or upon its heavy hydro-electric based secondary industries for its economic well-being. There has been much talk about the need to develop a "green" economy comprised of small-scale "clean" industries, arts-based industries and the manufacture and marketing of "distinctively Tasmanian" products. Although there have been some successes in such ventures, generally over the past quarter century the Tasmanian economy has languished, with unemployment and growth figures for the state being respectively the highest and the lowest in the country.

Against this backdrop, the growing importance of the tourism industry to the economy has been a constant factor. Whereas the 1973 visitor survey previously quoted put tourist spending at $32 million, the 1994 Tasmanian Visitor Survey estimated visitor spending at $452 million.[10] This exit poll ascertained that approximately 75 per cent of the 456, 400 visitors to the state during the year were holiday-makers, and that 62.8 per cent of them visited a historic site and 37 per cent a museum. The former figure indicated that more tourists visited historic sites than any other type of attraction. The two historic places receiving the most visitors were Port Arthur Historic Site (43.7 per cent) and Salamanca Place (38.5 per cent). That Tasmania's past has increased enormously in its profitability has escaped the eyes of neither government nor private investors.

As ever, the major government concern and expenditure has been occasioned by Port Arthur. The Asylum, which had been used as Port Arthur's Town Hall since 1896, was re-acquired by the state in 1975, and used to house the long-planned museum. In 1979, the federal and state governments agreed to contribute $9 million at ratio of 2:1 for the Port Arthur Conservation and Development Project. This allowed a team of 'historians, archaeologists, architects, administrators and others'

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10 DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM, SPORT AND RECREATION, 1994; *Tasmanian Visitor Survey;* Hobart, pamphlet.

to work for seven years on the conservation of the site.[11] The policy of the project was to maintain buildings in reasonable repair and to preserve the many which were still decaying. A small amount of restoration and adaptation work was also carried out. The entire program was conducted according to the principles of the Burra Charter, which itself was adopted in 1979.

In 1987, management of Port Arthur was transferred from the Department of Parks and Wildlife to the Port Arthur Historic Site Management Authority, and a toll booth was set up at the entrance to the site. All visitors to the site were now charged, and in 1991-92, for the first time, the Authority showed a small profit on the year's trading.[12]

Compared with Port Arthur, the remainder of the state's historic buildings have been accorded little government attention. The Department of National Parks and Wildlife (DNPW) inherited all the historic sites which until 1971 had been under the control of the Scenery Preservation Board. The historic sites at Darlington and elsewhere on Maria Island also came under the new Department's control as part of Maria Island National Park. From 1960, the island had been managed as a wildlife reserve controlled by the Fauna and Flora Board, which was disbanded at the same time as the Scenery Preservation Board. Only three additional historic sites have been gazetted by the DNPW:[13] Highfield House in the northwest (originally the home of the chief agent of the Van Diemen's Land Company), the Ross Female Factory in the midlands, and the Cascades site in Hobart. In 1991, additional land was gazetted at Eaglehawk Neck, and the area was proclaimed a historic site.

Of the historic sites under its direct management, the DNPW only charges for guided tours of one, Highfield House; however, several state-owned historic sites, nominally managed by the Department, are leased to other individuals or organisations and fees are charged for entry to these. Thus, the Shot Tower is still leased to private operators as it was when managed by the SPB; and, since 1972, the DNPW has extended a similar management policy to Richmond Gaol, Callington

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11 BOYER, P, 1985; Chasing Rainbows at Port Arthur, *Tasmanian Historical Research Association* **32** (2), 45-55.

12 PORT ARTHUR HISTORIC SITE MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY, *Annual Report 1991-92.*

13 This Department has undergone several name changes which have accompanied re-orderings of the state's bureaucracy. For the purpose of this simplified overview, the original name of the Department has been retained throughout.

Mill and Entally House; the former is leased to private operators, the latter two sites to the National Trust.

The status of the National Trust within Tasmania has increased markedly since 1972. It now controls eight properties throughout the state for which entry fees are charged. It also owns five other historic buildings which are used variously as a museum, a tea room, a meeting place, a shop and a weekend retreat; and a sixth, Wybalenna Chapel, now fully restored, may be inspected for a donation. The Trust has a full-time staff and is funded by governments, both state and federal, and some of its restoration programs by corporate sponsorship.

The June-July 1995 edition of *Tasmanian Travelways*, the Department of Tourism, Sport and Recreation's bi-monthly tourism magazine, lists, apart from sites owned and controlled by the DNPW and the National Trust, sixteen museums and heritage sites owned by state or local government and thirty-seven owned by private individuals or non-profit making groups of enthusiasts. These demonstrate many aspects of the state's development, particularly its industrial development, and include several mining museums, wool museums, maritime museums, forestry museums, transport museums, an agricultural museum, an apple museum, a toy museum, a whaling museum, a museum devoted to the history of trout fishing and a superseded hydro-electric power generating station, now a heritage site. Historical walks and tours are also offered by the National Trust and by a number of private operators in various parts of the state.

Another way in which profit from the past is extracted from tourists to Tasmania is by means of colonial or heritage accommodation. It is difficult to ascertain how much of this is provided in the state. One major umbrella organisation, Cottages of the Colony, listed 48 separate nineteenth century buildings in June 1995, and a 1993 publication describes 115 separate units, from small cottages to 'grand country houses', all built before 1920 and all claiming to offer heritage accommodation'.[14] The 1994 visitor survey previously quoted estimated that 85,400 or 18.7 per cent of visitors to Tasmania stayed in heritage/colonial accommodation, the average duration of the stay being 3.7 nights.

From the above, it is clear that the "past" has become a valuable commodity in Tasmania. This much was clearly recognised by the Liberal Premier, Robin Gray, who in the run-up to the 1986 election announced a series of measures to 'preserve

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14 BROWNELL, M, 1993; *A Guide to Tasmanian Heritage Accommodation*; Platypus, Hobart.

and enhance our heritage'. After its return at the polls, the Gray government introduced the Historic Tasmania program. A consultant was appointed in 1988, 50,000 copies of a tourist guide, *Historic Tasmania*, were printed, and workshops and seminars were held. As part of the program, a "heritage expert", Dr Neil Cossons, Director of the Science Museum, London, visited Hobart in December 1988 and delivered a lecture entitled "Profits from the Past" to an audience of a hundred bureaucrats, National Trust members, historians and others. He informed his audience that , 'the best economic future for Britain is selling quality history', and advocated that Tasmania adopt the same approach.[15] This session was followed up in 1989 at the Municipal Association's annual conference, where a video, also called *Profits from the Past* was screened. According to the *Mercury:*

> [It] was slick and professional, the images just right. Lots of heritage, gracious 19th century buildings, and the promise that declining towns and villages could be turned around if they recycled their old buildings, identified their age, and marketed it.[16]

Before the 1989 election, Historic Tasmania promised to spread $100,000 through the municipalities of Stanley, Strahan, Latrobe and Oatlands to fund surveys of their 'heritage potential'. However, the Liberals were defeated in the 1989 poll, and the Historic Tasmania program was dropped.

The commodification of Tasmania's history adopted by the tourist industry and encouraged by the Liberal government may be seen as the new thesis. As with the heritage industry of Britain, criticised so comprehensively by Robert Hewison, so the heritage industry of Tasmania trades mainly upon nostalgia. Moreover, Hewison based his assessment of Britain as '[h]ypnotised by images of the past' upon there being 41 heritage centres and 2,131 museums in the UK acceptable as such to the Museums Association.[17] Tasmania, with a population of about half a million, has at least sixty. If Britain had a corresponding number for the size of its population, it would have 7,200.

In the Introduction, the question was posed: to what extent has Tasmania's heritage industry fulfilled a positive purpose, and to what extent has it diminished the Tasmanian people's 'capacity for creative change'? A tentative answer might be that until 1972, the state's heritage industry did indeed fulfil a positive purpose, in that it provided a lever for the conservation of a considerable number of historic places

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15 SOUTH OF NO NORTH **2**, April 1989, broadsheet published by the Historical Terrorists Of Tasmania.

16 MERCURY, 24 May 1989, p9.

17 See page 2 above.

and artefacts which might otherwise might have been lost, their significance unrecognised. In the last two decades, however, the development of Tasmania's heritage industry has tended towards the provision of a fixed, comfortable view of the past that is both ubiquitous and pervasive. However, not all Tasmanians have accepted this meekly. The most outspoken of the recent critics of the state's heritage industry have significantly been historians. For them, history is neither comfortable nor demarked from the present. Rather, it is seen as having the potential to reveal attitudes inherent in the present, and to stimulate many to challenge them. The criticism of the state's heritage industry by this group of historians, limited in quantity but often trenchant, may be regarded as the current dialectic's antithesis. It has also led to a certain amount of praxis, which presents a clear challenge to the *status quo*.

The first challenge is occurring within the bureaucracy. The present Department of Environment and Land Management (DELM), which subsumed the old DNPW, bases its conservation practice upon the precepts of the Burra Charter and Dr J S Kerr's *The Conservation Plan.*[18] Article 16 of the former states: 'The contribution of all periods to a place must be respected',[19] and thus advocates a policy which, unlike the previous policies of the SPB and the National Trust of "freezing a place in time", allows for the possibility of telling 'the story of social change', advocated by Plumb as a 'valuable educational process in itself'.[20] The Department's Cultural Heritage Unit is concerned that its conservation plans are both appropriate and relevant to local communities; to that end it conducts extensive community consultation, planning workshops and SWOT analyses prior to drawing up conservation plans. At the Highfield Historic Site local planning workshops:

> one of the strengths identified by the local Stanley community was that their town was 'real', 'authentic', 'not artificial', 'not like Richmond'. The overwhelming attitude, and this came from tourist operators in the district, was that somehow Richmond had become fake through over-exploitation, while Stanley had retained its character as an old town, not a 'heritage' site.[21]

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18 KERR, J S, 1990; *The Conservation Plan, a Guide to the Preparation of Conservation Plans for Places of European Cultural Significance;* National Trust (NSW), Sydney.

19 MARQUIS-KYLE and WALKER, *op. cit.*, 50.

20 See page 2 above.

21 DAVIES, M, 1993; Cultural Tourism, History and Historic Precincts, in HALL, M and McARTHUR, S (Eds), *Heritage Management in New Zealand and Australia;* Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 188-196.

The Unit's desire to see its historic sites as relevant to local living communities parallels its dislike for the concept of 'colonial', which it sees as 'serv[ing] to break the continuity of history, denying the contribution of much that went on after that period'. Furthermore, it is highly critical of the ersatz colonial experience, as provided by colonial accommodation, which, according to Martin Davies, the Unit's Historical Archaeologist, 'whilst offering a welcome change from the standard motel, hotel or pub accommodation, distort[s] the historical experience. Food served hot, hygienic bathing facilities, electric blankets, flushing toilets are all expected as part of modern conveniences, but they have nothing to do with the colonial experience'.[22]

The Unit's power to effect change is limited, however. For instance, Entally House was regarded as a 'dilemma' when inherited by the DNPW from the SPB. It was 'an ersatz colonial mansion', the organisation of its rooms for exhibition to visitors bearing no relationship to their historical function, the brochure on the house being little more than a catalogue of furniture. Unfortunately, scarce resources and the policy decision to lease the house to the National Trust have meant that the conservation of Entally is still unsatisfactory, and the dilemma largely remains.[23]

Inadequate funding has also meant that the DNPW has, like the SPB before it, been restricted in its ability to protect additional historic places. While its policy for historic reservation is 'to acquire important sites as they come up and worry about management later', its acquisition fund has all but been exhausted.[24] Nevertheless, two of its most recent acquisitions, the site of the Ross female factory and the remains of the Cascades, once Hobart's women's prison, have allowed the Cultural Heritage Unit to rectify, at least partially, the past silences on women's history in Tasmania. The Department's revised interpretation of Richmond Gaol has also resulted in a display which places on record the circumstances of both the female and the Aboriginal prisoners incarcerated there.

In spite of this expansion of content, the forms of interpretation employed by the Department are largely traditional. It is nevertheless the intention of the Cultural Heritage Unit to use its historic sites in order to 'educate through the emotions'. A theatre company has recently been hired to work on Sarah Island throughout the

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22 DAVIES, *op. cit.*

23 Personal comment: Geoffrey Lennox, Interpretation Officer, Department of Environment and Land Management.

24 Personal comment: Martin Davies, Historical Archaeologist, Cultural Heritage Unit, DELM. The following paragraphs are based upon information supplied by Mr Davies.

visitor season, a public artist has been commissioned to install a display at the Cascades Historic Site and the development of interpretive theatre is high on the Unit's future agenda.

But whatever approach the Department adopts, its work is unlikely to be subversive. At best it will contribute towards the paradigm shift which has been taking place in society at large throughout the past two decades. Conservative values still remain enshrined within Tasmania, and, while recent challenges to the praxis of the Tasmanian Museum and the National Trust have demonstrated the presence of a lively alternative to conservatism among the state's heritage professionals, the bastions of tradition have survived largely intact.

At the Tasmanian Museum, Julia Clark, Curator of Anthropology throughout the 1980s, sought to revise current praxis. Her approach was outlined in an essay, "The Truth, the Whole Truth and Nothing but the Truth":

> I feel very strongly that there can be no history which is 'objective', and that most of what passes for it is actually that which supports the status quo, and riddled with undeclared, even denied, bias. All the history which challenged this world view is thus labelled 'biased' and dismissed as bad history. Those of us involved with Aboriginal or women's history are very familiar with this kind of attitude.[25]

Clark's work involved the redesigning of the Aboriginal gallery to take account of the input of the contemporary Tasmanian Aboriginal community, and of the convict gallery to stress the place of women and class in convict history. Her most challenging work culminated in the photographic exhibitions, *This Southern Outpost* in 1988 and *Modern Times* in 1992. The former, which covered the period 1846-1914 resulted in 'One (female) Federal member [of Parliament] even contacting the Lord Mayor to tell her that she should remove such 'socialist propaganda' from the hallowed walls of the Town Hall immediately'. The latter, covering the years 1900-1980, continued to be 'feminist, "workerist" and subjective'.[26]

While the work of Julia Clark was quietly absorbed by the Tasmanian Museum, a challenge in the early 1980s to the praxis of the National Trust led to a backlash. Regretting the 'embarrassed denial of their (and our) past' by working class families, the Tasmanian historian, Peter MacFie, and several fellow members of the Coal River Group of the National Trust sought National Estate funding through the Trust

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25 CLARK, J, 1990; The Truth, the Whole Truth and nothing but the Truth, *Museums Association of Australia (Tasmanian Branch) Newsletter* **28**, 14-16.

26 CLARK, 1991, *op. cit.*

towards the restoration of a threatened vernacular building, the Miller's Cottage at Richmond. Following their lack of success, they sought and obtained a CEP grant, but required a further $6,000. This they were:

> forced to borrow from the Commonwealth Bank as they offered a lower rate of interest than the Southern Regional Committee of the National Trust were prepared to loan! This was despite there being over $64,000 invested in Hydro Electric Commission loans ..., and another $30,000 approximately being held in other accounts. In addition nearly $1,000,000 had accumulated in the Hobart Preservation Fund to which the Trust had contributed.[27]

MacFie attributes the Trust's lack of interest in the project to its '"grand-mansions" approach to history'. The Miller's Cottage nevertheless was restored, the first such project to be undertaken by the Trust in southern Tasmania for a number of years, but following its completion, the organisation's finances were restructured. No longer were regional groups permitted their previous control over the funds which they raised in the Trust's name; the parent body assumed absolute control over all funds, and central hegemony prevailed. Many of the more radical Trust members left the organisation in protest.

By far the most virulent attack to date upon the dominant practice in the commodification of history is that contained in the pages of the short-lived broadsheet, *South of No North.* These were written in 1989 as a direct response to the Gray government's Historic Tasmania program. Inspired by the clandestine Samizdat protest literature of the Soviet Union, the historians, Richard Flanagan and Kim Pearce, adopted the sobriquet of "Historical Terrorists of Tasmania" (HITT) and wrote the broadsheets anonymously. These they then distributed under car windscreen wipers and in the bars of hotels. Circulation thereafter was informal but effective, with one copy at least ending up in Antarctica.[28] The broadsheets condemned the past purveyed by Historic Tasmania as not 'threatening or confrontational' but 'comforting and secure'. It was:

> crowbar history, smashing the mirror of the past into a thousand fragments, each of which could then be flogged off by the highest bidder to the histocrats trained in the science of salesmanship....
>
> history without context and largely devoid of the purposeful activity of people ... history not as a key to understanding the condition of people, but as a capitalist product.[29]

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27 MACFIE, P, 1986; *The Miller's Cottage (Milton Cottage) (1837) and Tower Windmill, Richmond (1831-32)*; typescript held at the Tasmaniana Library.

28 Personal comment: Richard Flanagan.

29 SOUTH OF NO NORTH **2**, April 1989, broadsheet published by the Historical Terrorists Of Tasmania.

HITT produced its broadsheets 'in the hope that the Tasmanian people will reject those presently vandalising our past, and that they will seek to begin to produce their own history, rather than swallow the history of business and government'.[30] Flanagan had the opportunity to incorporate his own interpretation of history in the Strahan Wharf Centre, completed in 1992. This $1,000,000 project was funded mainly from the Commonwealth Government's World Heritage Program, and created by the team of Kevin Perkins (designer), Richard Morris-Nunn (architect) and Richard Flanagan. Their intention was not to 'create a Centre that gives authoritative answers that are in reality neither authoritative nor answers ... [but] to create a Centre of questions, a starting point rather than an end point for future thought and discussion'.[31] Their approach was contentious and faced strong opposition from Tasmania's Liberal government, but the fact that the project was largely funded by federal sources ensured that it was eventually realised as planned. It stands as one of the few challenges in Tasmania to the prevalent conservative trend in "heritage tourism".

The thesis, then, is dominant. It is the commodification of the 'past', as defined by Plumb, for profit. The form of commodification, the view of the past presented, is part of an ideological superstructure which upholds the profit motive. It is designed to encourage those who partake of it to acquiesce in the values of the present. It does not challenge them to question their attitudes to class, gender, race, ecology or penology. It states its "facts" with authority, it appeals because it comforts; that it is so clearly endorsed by capital and power discourages questioning. It is a view of the past both monolithic and time-honoured.

The antithesis, by contrast, is irritating: a strident, persistent *enfant terrible* with no respect for its elders and betters. Its only hope if it is to effect the change it desires is to succeed in the market place. *Ergo* it must entertain, as did the work of Marcus Clarke and John Beattie. The Strahan Wharf Centre is achieving this. The Department of Tourism, Sport and Recreation bills it as 'the states (*sic*) most unusual interpretive centre'.[32] It is also proving to be a strong commercial success, and believed to be fulfilling its function of keeping visitors in the region. The question, however, remains: to what extent will its success encourage the investment in other

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30 SOUTH OF NO NORTH **2**, April 1989.

31 PERKINS, K, MORRIS-NUNN, R and FLANAGAN, R, undated; *Strahan Visitor Centre: Interpretation Brief*, unpublished typescript, 5.

32 TASMANIAN TRAVELWAYS, June '95-July '95, p36.

similar attempts at what Agnes Heller calls 'radical hermeneutics',[33] and to what extent will they be engulfed in a commercialised past, which, whatever its politics, threatens like the 'tradition of all the dead generations' to weigh 'like a nightmare on the brain of the living'?[34] Tasmanians may well ask: is such a synthesis the "future" they face?

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33 '"Radical hermeneutics" means a generalizable approach to histories on the level of everyday consciousness.... Hernemeutics has a dialogical relation to the past. Radical hermeneutics is also dialogical: it mediates the consciousness of planetarian responsibility towards the past. It approaches the past not only in order to find out the meaning, the sense, the value of former historical actions, objectivations, and agents, but also in order to disclose what is *in common* between them and us. We communicate with past beings as with *equally human* beings. In approaching each past history we communicate with humankind.' (HELLER, *op. cit.*, 47.)

34 MARX, K, 1977; *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*; Progress, Moscow, 10 (first published in 1852).

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APPENDIX I

Article 1 of the Burra Charter: Definitions

1.1 ***Place*** means, site area, building or other work, group of buildings or other works together with associated contents and surrounds.

1.2 ***Cultural significance*** means aesthetic, historic, scientific or social value for past, present or future generations.

1.3 ***Fabric*** means all the physical material of the place.

1.4 ***Conservation*** means all the processes of looking after a place so as to retain its *cultural significance.* It includes maintenance and may according to circumstances include *preservation, restoration, reconstruction* and *adaptation* and will be commonly a combination of more than one of these.

1.5 ***Maintenance*** means the continuous protective care of the *fabric* of a *place,* and is to be distinguished from repair. Repair involves *restoration* or *reconstruction* and it should be treated accordingly.

1.6 ***Preservation*** means maintaining the *fabric* of a *place* in its existing state and retarding deterioration.

1.7 ***Restoration*** means returning EXISTING *fabric* of a *place* to a known earlier state by removing accretions or by reassembling existing components without the introduction of new material.

1.8 ***Reconstruction*** means returning a *place* as nearly as possible to a known earlier state and is distinguishable by the introduction of materials (old or new) into the *fabric.* This is not to be confused with either recreation or conjectural reconstruction which are outside the scope of this Charter.

1.9 ***Adaptation*** means modifying a *place* to suit proposed compatible uses.

1.10 ***Compatible use*** means a use which involves no change to the culturally significant fabric, changes which are substantially reversible, or changes which require minimal impact.